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THE MUSICAL LIFE



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By Irving
Kolodin



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TO IRMA

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IRVING KOLODIN

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THE MUSICAL LIFE



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♦ THE MUSICAL LIFE

IT MAY begin early or it may begin late. Mozart was writing music at the age of five, concertizing at six, and creating works of present-day interest at the age of eleven. Borodin, on the other hand, chose chemistry rather than music as a career and did not begin to produce the works by which he is remembered until he was nearly forty. Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a celebrity at eighteen, and fairly forgotten at fifty. For Carl Nielsen, the "musical life" (outside of his native Denmark) did not begin until after he had died.

The rise and fall of the creative tide is a factor with which no man can reckon. Hugo Wolf was miserable for many months because no music would come to him. Richard Wagner could calmly lay aside the composition of the *Ring* with Siegfried in the forest, and then pick it up again after a dozen years had passed. A reputation may be made with a song that is written in half an hour, or it may reflect a task of years, as with the *Franck Symphony*. Converting the internal "singing and ringing" (as Paul Hindemith has called it) into a communicable script may be agonizing, as it was for Beethoven, or the equivalent of automatic writing, as it was for Mendelssohn.

To start with the creators is to deal, of course, with a first factor, for where would all the others—the players and the singers, and we, the listeners—be without them? The bewildering variety of natures and types they provide is exceeded only by the diversity of their products. For J. S. Bach, the

any sonata of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, or Brahms, any part of dozens of operas, symphonies, concertos, and chamber pieces. But what would he know of Okeghem, Giles Farnaby, Ernesto Lecuona, or Alberto Ginastera? They, and many others, are part of the musical life as it is lived by some members of society somewhere at this very time.

Samuel Butler contributed to the riches of the musical life with his Handelian allusions in *The Way of All Flesh*, as Bernard Shaw did with the Mozartean framework of *Man and Superman*. Most musical novels are only poorer as novels than they are as musical documentation, but Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest* fixes one milieu imperishably for us, as Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph* fixed another. Willa Cather, Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, Romain Rolland, Leo Tolstoy, and Ivan Turgenev are some who have made lesser writers proud of the community of interests we share. Max Klinger's great statue of Beethoven and Auguste Rodin's eloquent head of Mahler are two instances, among many possible others, of the statement in stone of values derived from sound. Picasso on Stravinsky, Renoir on Wagner, Covarrubias on Gershwin must also be considered, for the musical life would be poorer without them, as it would without the inspired improvising of cartoonist Gerard Hoffnung on the theme of orchestral musicians and their instruments.

Brahms and Wagner, who could not agree on much else that was contemporary, united in an appreciation for Johann Strauss, whom Richard Strauss had the good judgment to term "the laughing genius of Vienna." Bartók and Bantock are as far apart aesthetically as Bangor and Bangkok are geographically, but both may become, to some degree, part of the mind and personality of a third person. Franz Lehár

was Adolf Hitler's favorite composer, but are we to renounce the pain-relieving properties of morphine because some people become maddened by it?

There are not many of us who could aspire to the mental gymnastics of the conductor in the by now legendary story—on one occasion it is Toscanini, on another Stokowski, on a third Ormandy—who counseled a harp-player not to fret, in mid-concert, about a broken string, because he had mentally reviewed the remaining works of the program and made certain that the broken string would not be required. But even those with less rarified talents can live the musical life indoors or out, at home or abroad, alone or in a crowd. They may be riding in a Fifth Avenue bus, but what they see is not Central Park, but Wagner's Kareol as the lamenting English horn rises in the mind's ear, throbbing inflection and all.

Those who have become fully naturalized in this ocean-spanning community trade a part of their own nativity for affiliation with a broader fellowship in which race or religion, even age or sex, is no basis for exclusion. The passport they carry is rarely a visible one, though I had one experience to the contrary on an occasion when I was returning from Europe by air and made the obligatory stop at Gander, Newfoundland. The diverse faces crowded around the coffee bar appeared no better to my tired eyes than I did to theirs, though one on the other side of the room persisted in looking familiar. It was not until I noticed that the yellow pamphlet-sized object he carried in his hand was an Eulenburg miniature score that I recognized the face as that of the violinist Szymon Goldberg.

More often a visible symbol of this is not so readily to hand. It would have been of benefit to me in another situation,

when I joined a group of people in a Perpignan café after a concert in the Casals Festival. Some of them I had been introduced to; others I knew by sight. Among the latter was the eminent violist William Primrose. I had, shortly before, heard the Hallé Orchestra in a London concert directed by Sir John Barbirolli, and something about that event prompted me to question Primrose about the orchestra. His answer was not very informative, and the incident was forgotten in the din of other table talk. Many weeks later, having returned to New York, I was entertained by the following letter:

Dear Irving Kolodin:

If I had retained the suppleness of my athletic youth I would have kicked myself that night in Perpignan when I realised next to whom I had been sitting without being aware of it. You and . . . [name on request] are the only two members of your particular fraternity I have ever really wanted to meet and talk with. . . . It was only when I had a square look at you I realized who you were. Until then, believe it or not, I was under the impression that another Manchester enthusiast was in the company! The reason for this was that you threw in some observations, and asked some questions about, Sir J B and the Hallé Orchestra: furthermore, while I recognized an accent that was certainly not South of England, I did not associate it with the United States. These two clues led me to a typical Watsonian deduction, and would have earned the scorn of Holmes had he been present. Now, Mancunians in general know much more about music than I have ever done, or, for that matter anyone else, and I always ca' canny in their presence. Will these explanations earn your forgiveness, and may I hope to see you sometime in America and chew the rag someday? . . .

Sincerely,
WILLIAM PRIMROSE

Had I not elected the musical life at an earlier age than I can possibly recall, I would have been denied the company of tenor Jussi Bjoerling on the terrace of the Grand Hotel, on the occasion of my only visit to Stockholm. The lunch would have been pleasurable in any circumstances, but it became memorable when coffee time arrived. Bjoerling paused suddenly in mid-sentence, directing my attention to an elderly man striding erectly along the quay in conversation with a companion. "Look!" he said. "There goes my King." It was, indeed, Gustaf V, who had been lunching at his club next to the hotel, and was strolling back to the Palace to attend to his afternoon's duties. I was acquainted with the legend of the royal family's devotion to democratic ways, but it would have remained a legend to me without the perception of my associate. His pleasure in what he saw, and the pride with which he conveyed the information, told me more about the Swedes' affection for their monarch than anything I heard or saw otherwise during a week's visit.

Addiction to the musical life has a way of altering perspectives and influencing associations. 1732 may be the year of George Washington's birth for some, but for me it is the year of Joseph Haydn's. I have visited Vienna without eating *Schlagobers* or buying any Biedermeier, but I saw the house where Gluck died, where Schubert was born, and the one in which Sibelius lived as a student. It struck me as soundly Viennese for the community to honor the part it played in the Finn's life, even though it rarely hears any of the music he composed. For that matter, where else but in Vienna would the news of a change in conductor for the evening's opera appear on the front page of an afternoon paper? When I saw this announcement relating to Clemens Krauss several years ago, it brought back the event that persuaded Hugo

Wolf's friends that his mind, finally, had snapped: He was convinced he had been appointed *Intendant* of the Staatsoper and was offering prime positions to his intimates!

I missed a thousand things in a visit to Rome, but not the exuberantly playful fountains of the Villa d'Este, where Liszt lived and worked and about which he wrote one of the first fountain pieces in musical history. I have not stood on a London bridge at midnight as Big Ben tolled the hour, but I have a mental image of the plaque in Westminster Abbey commemorating Elgar. Some people have difficulty remembering telephone numbers, but, as a mental exercise during the Beethoven centennial of 1927, I learned the opus numbers of most of his works. Thus if I am plagued to recall whether a proper sequence is 27-58, or 28-75, I merely note that this number corresponds to the "Moonlight" Sonata and the Fourth Concerto. When a friend who previously has been the *Egmont* Overture and *An die ferne Geliebte* becomes a "Rasumovsky" quartet and the First Symphony, the system tends to become strained.

In addition to associations and perspectives, a settled acceptance of the musical life tends to make listening part of a continuous, expanding panorama of history and events. I have heard the Strauss *Burleske* for piano and orchestra many times, but it took on quite new values and suggestions when heard directly after the D minor Concerto of Brahms. The G minor Symphony of Mozart heard in the aftermath of Bruckner's D minor has a richer intensity, a more desperate communication of strong feelings simply stated. Sometimes an uncommonly perceptive performance will make the hitherto commonplace seem inspired (we are only too familiar with the reverse). So, for that matter, may one's desire for a particular kind of music at a particular time, a thirst for the

slaking draught of melodic freshness that only a cup of Schubert can provide.

An art enthusiast must depend, for purposes of comparison and contrast, on the way a gallery hangs a favorite picture. The musical enthusiast can create his own gallery, choose his own specimens, juxtapose them as he will, and otherwise tour the centuries, self-guided. All he requires is the scores to read, if he has the knack, or an assortment of records, or—best of all—just the quantity of silence required for the recollection of how a thing sounds. He who has the *Kleine Nachtmusik* of Mozart in his mind has no need of sheep to conquer insomnia. He can have his *Nachtmusik* and his sleep too, by pursuing the work mentally from the beginning. I venture to say that by the middle of the “*Romanza*” he will have fallen asleep.

The musical life poses strange absorptions and affinities. Such as the fascination for composers as diverse as Beethoven and Offenbach of Leporello’s “*Notte e giorno faticar.*” It crops up as one of the variants in the former’s elaborate series founded on a theme of Diabelli, and it also occurs in the prologue to the latter’s *Tales of Hoffmann*. It might make an engaging subject for Elysian Fields table talk among Mozart, Beethoven, and Offenbach. What, however, Mozart might say to Reger for the latter’s encrustation of nonfanciful complications on a simple idea from his A major Piano Sonata I prefer not to imagine.

Bach’s was an amazing accomplishment, but it becomes incredible when we think that he never heard a note of Mozart. We, who think of music as a “literature,” can scarcely comprehend that Mozart knew nothing of Schubert’s music, or Schubert of Brahms’s. The musical life of this generation is certainly the richest of all, for it has the longest perspective

of masterworks to review, the most varied vista of all that makes music great. I am well acquainted with the plaint that inspiration is declining and real expressivity passing away. I am far from agreeing with those ominous words, but I find a tranquil relief from contention in contemplation of the past, the untold quantity of the new, the unexplored, and the purposeful it contains.

The musical life is not bounded by time or confined in place. It makes us, at will, contemporary with Sweelinck or Sibelius, R. Schumann or W. Schuman. It is an existence without locality or date, related only to the values of tone and texture which make the briefest Chopin prelude as much of a totality as the whole of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It can amuse us with Mozart's *Musikalischer Spass* or ennoble us with the closing pages of Strauss's *Heldenleben*. It is one section of a cosmos, dependent (like life itself) on air for the vibrations in which it exists, but no less of infinite suggestion.

It is a life with many rewards and some irritations. It would not, in any real sense, be a "life" if it lacked irritations, lacked identity with the humans who provide its pulse. There will always be new virtuosos to puzzle us with their judgment while delighting us with their skill, new singers to arouse old passions, new conductors to put themselves on the pedestal to which the composer has the only rightful claim. When any of these things ceases to be, and the musical life is regulated, uncontaminated, and correct, not only will the critic have lost his function, but the life itself will have lost much of its fascinating unpredictability and ever-enticing novelty.

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CONCERT HALL

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CONCERT HALL

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♦ *THE ART OF THE PROGRAM*

A RECENT occurrence in London brought into focus an aspect of American musical life which requires attention if the interest of more than a few is not to expire. It was a program of orchestral music directed by the Romanian Constantin Silvestre. It began with the "closing" scene from *Götterdämmerung*, proceeded with Debussy's three *Nocturnes*, then offered Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, with Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* in conclusion. It bore the title "The Retreat from Wagner."

With or without title, the clear implication is that whoever devised the program saw his task as no mere selection of individual items totaling seventy-five minutes of music, but as the planning of a sequence with some internal relationship, balance, and continuity. How well Silvestre accomplished his task I can judge only from the English press comments, which were more than ordinarily enthusiastic. But whether or not he did justice to all the music, how refreshing a change from the average American symphony orchestra program running a predictable course from a standard over-

ture to a standard symphony, with a courtesy call on the contemporary repertory before the all-too-common conclusion with a virtuoso concerto!

A first inclination would be to put the blame for the present stagnant condition on our subscription system and the "demands" of the audience. But Leopold Stokowski functioned under the same system in the twenties, and regularly produced programs that were as much a part of his success as were the superb performances of his orchestra. Minus the "superb performances," as much might be said of Walter Damrosch before him. Serge Koussevitzky's programs, in their own way, came to be equally distinctive, whether he was performing for his own subscription audience in Boston or for the audiences that eagerly awaited him in New York. Now and again Eugene Ormandy, more infrequently Charles Munch, will strike a happy combination of elements. In either case it seems more accidental than deliberate. It is wholly so in the case of Dimitri Mitropoulos with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. His program-making success most often depends upon the presence of some work for which he has a special sympathy, by Strauss or Rachmaninoff, Schönberg or Vaughan Williams, as the focal point. Otherwise, among the conductors whose programs I regularly see, it strikes me that Chicago's Fritz Reiner consistently devises the best now being heard.

The fault, to invert the celebrated statement of Cassius, is not with us, the audience, but with our "stars," the conductors. Most seem to have forgotten (we generously assume that at some time or other they knew) that no piece of music is an isolated event of itself unless it has the length and substance of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* or Ninth Symphony, the Mahler No. 2, or Verdi's *Requiem*. Action and

interplay are as much a part of a successful program as is the performance of it.

Looking at random through some programs recently performed in New York, I find the following one: Brahms: Variations on a Theme by Haydn; Mendelssohn: Concerto in E minor for violin and orchestra; Brahms: Symphony No. 2. This, I submit, is a classic in static program-making, with a minimum of variety compounded by a maximum of duplication. It begins nowhere, goes nowhere, ends nowhere. I could find logic in the two works of Brahms if they were parts of a whole program devoted to him. In the circumstances, however, they suggest a white-on-rye sandwich.

Too often, I am afraid, the kind of thought underlying such a sequence was typified by a conductor who mentioned an engagement at the Hollywood Bowl for which the soloist was the late Walter Gieseke. When I inquired about the program he answered: "I do Mozart 'Jupiter,' he does Mozart A major, Number Twenty-three. I do *Death and Transfiguration*, he does Grieg A minor." Never, at any moment, was there an intimation of what "we" were doing. Subsequent conversations with conductors revealed that the only time "we" do anything is when a wifely partner describes the success "we" had in Vienna with Strauss's *Elektra*.

Such arbitrary reasoning is a larger part of the average season's symphony programming than is commonly realized, especially in New York. Provision must be made for two dozen or more assorted concertos in the course of a twenty-six or twenty-eight week series (occasionally, to satisfy the needs of separate Thursday-Friday, Saturday, and Sunday series, there may be three concertos in one four-day span). Add the conventional Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Haydn symphonies (in

the order of the frequency with which they occur), and the programs are half committed. Season with the required amount of Strauss, Debussy, and Ravel, add a touch of Russian dressing, and the room for but a fresh or zestful garnish is minimal.

Some ingenuity might be applied to the evening-opening overture, suite, or tone poem, but even here a state of mind prevails which is fatal to enterprise or variety. For example, a prominent conductor once told me why he performed Beethoven's *Prometheus Overture* rather than *The Ruins of Athens*, the *Fidelio*, or the *King Stephen*. "It's very handy," he explained. This meant it was short, free of technical complications, and could be performed with no more than a run-through rehearsal. It is as though a man dressed himself by putting on shoes, shirt, and suit carefully chosen for color, and then reached into a dark closet and added the first tie that came to hand.

I deplore pointing a finger of guilt at people as hard pressed to make a living as violinists and pianists, but the average season of orchestral concerts in most American cities shows far more solo performers than is warranted by the supply of first-class artists. A first canon of orchestral management (as distinguished from musical direction) is to book as many soloists as the budget permits, for several conflicting reasons. One is to acquire those limited number of artists who "draw," to assure a pleasing number of capacity audiences. The added attendance may only offset the extra fee, but at least the house is sold out. However, these prized attractions are limited in number, and often entail the engagement from the same management of less desirable talents that it is promoting. They are cheaper, but rarely justify their cost. The time they utilize might be more usefully occupied otherwise.

The complications, in both cases, are numerous and incapable. Violinists, in the nature of things, want to play compositions that other violinists play, to show how much better they play them. Pianists, with a somewhat larger repertory, are not notably more public-spirited. The audience hears, over and again, what it already knows. After a few years, it is either hostile to novelty or disinterested in "the usual." In either case, the repertory of music and its potential audience are sharply contracted. One experienced conductor has solved the dilemma ingeniously: only the people who really "draw" play the popular concerto literature. The others, as he says, "I let play what I want them to play"—meaning the newer literature of Hindemith, Peragallo, or Barber.

It is not generally recognized that the present profusion of soloists has some specifically historical causes. Prior to the depression and the vast increase in personal income taxes, virtually every orchestra of consequence had someone who underwrote its deficit. In New York it was Clarence Mackay or Harry Flagler, in Philadelphia it was the Bok family; in Cincinnati, Mrs. Charles P. Taft; in Boston, Henry Lee Higginson and the fund he left. It was assumed that the orchestra would lose money, and the music director was unhampered in deciding how the loss could be accomplished most profitably. With the depression and the disappearance of individual sponsors, personal responsibility has been replaced by board responsibility. The board hires a manager to keep its losses within manageable bounds, and the manager, in many cases, decides how many soloists are required to keep receipts as high as possible.

Statistics are always more valid than a mere statement of opinion, wherefore I offer the following figures for those whose memory of the progress may be dim. In 1928, after

consolidation with the New York Symphony, the Philharmonic season of 112 concerts was marked by the appearance of 13 soloists. In 1935, it was 16 (the conductors, in addition to Toscanini, included from year to year Beecham, Furtwängler, Kleiber, Klemperer, and Bruno Walter, all masters of their art). In the later 1930's, when Barbirolli was music director, the number of soloists climbed into the twenties. By 1946-7, the number had increased to 30, with 65 concerts at which soloists appeared, about 35 in which they did not. In 1956-7, the totals showed 19 pianists, 9 violinists, 3 cellists, and 9 vocalists (the latter were divided into groups of three and four for choral works, plus two or so for solo appearances). Rather than totaling the "two dozen or so" previously mentioned, concertos numbered thirty-two!

Along with this increase in quantity and decline in quality has come the custom of using the soloist as a reward for the audience's good behavior in sitting through the preceding performances by the conductor and his orchestra. This ingenious dodge can be credited—as far as America is concerned—to Leopold Stokowski. At his Philadelphia Orchestra program of Tuesday evening, November 8, 1932, Stokowski presented Sibelius's Fourth Symphony, Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite, an orchestration of Debussy's "*La Cathédrale engloutie*," and, after everything else, the new Piano Concerto (G major) of Ravel. Said one commentator: "When the work is presented at some point in a program appropriate for a concerto and not at the end, as if it were a grand spectacular finale, this recorder will endeavor to comment on it. Madison Square Garden, not Carnegie Hall, is the place for the order 'shake hands and wind up.'"

The singularity, in 1932, of the procedure is conveyed by the singularity of the comment. Perhaps in this specific in-

stance, its position after all else was better for the new work. But the enthusiasm with which Stokowski's innovation was imitated by others showed him to be, perhaps, an unwitting devil's advocate. All sorts of lesser men have converted the procedure into a cowardly insurance against the audience's right to depart. If the consideration of the soloist as a "draw" is endorsed, the audience is obviously being held captive to hear what has attracted it. In any reasonable plan, the concerto should be part of a sequence, an item around which something consecutive can be evolved. Placed before or after the intermission, it acts as a lever for program balance.

Ideally, a symphony orchestra should serve a city as a museum or library does: as a custodian of the best creations of all periods, providing its public with the range of material from which a broad point of view can be derived. It would do for music what the others do for painting or sculpture, fiction or poetry. In a period of five seasons or so, the listener would be taken on a comprehensive trip through schools and styles.

Some responsibility, of course, rests on the taste of the conductor. In a time when conductors developed normally—prior, say, to 1940—the progression was almost invariably from the theater to the concert hall. Apprenticeship in an opera house provided the talented European youth of twenty with the techniques of his craft: occasional concerts enabled him to learn the repertory as his experience widened. After fifteen years or so, he might be qualified to have his own orchestra. In another decade, he might be ready for international attention. The classic formulation was in terms of a command of the standard repertory, to which "specialties" were added. Theodore Thomas or Stock in Chicago; Nikisch, Muck, or Monteux in Boston; Stokowski in Philadelphia; Damrosch in New York; Reiner in Cincinnati (later Pitts-

burgh and Chicago) had such command in common, varied though their ways of articulating it might be.

More recently, we in the United States have been in the hands of specialists who only laboriously mastered the basic literature. Koussevitzky was one, Toscanini another. Both had the qualities of personal magnetism to sustain audience attention under almost any circumstances, but had they not endured as long as they did—Koussevitzky for twenty-five years, Toscanini for nearly thirty—the judgment would have been that they never did “get the repertory.” It was only with long experience that Koussevitzky came to be a responsible Brahms and Beethoven interpreter as well as a master of the Russians, the French impressionists, and the areas between. Not until Toscanini returned to begin his “second” American career as a symphony conductor with the NBC Orchestra did he transcend interests famously narrow and amazingly indiscriminate.

Unfortunately these exceptional instances were regarded as patterns by which men with less talent and fewer specialties could “make do” while learning the needed staples. Mitropoulos and Munch, Bernstein, the late Guido Cantelli, Thor Johnson, Walter Hendl, Antal Dorati, Enrique Jorda, Ferenc Fricsay, Desiré Defauw, and Rafael Kubelik are typical of the trend. Of the foregoing, Mitropoulos, Munch, and Bernstein have the intuitive abilities to risk the danger with a fair chance of survival. Such others as Defauw, Kubelik, Hendl, Johnson, and Fricsay were simply not ready, and have had their day. Such a well-equipped conductor as William Steinberg proceeds steadily to a position that must one day be more prominent than his present one in Pittsburgh, to the sort of post that Reiner has attained in Chicago, Szell in Cleveland, Paray in Detroit, and Ormandy in Philadelphia.

For a discussion of programs to lead to a discussion of performers is perhaps inevitable. A well-meaning person whose duties are concerned with the management of an orchestra asked me not long ago to devise some "fine" programs for the beginning of the following season's concerts. "Who's going to conduct?" I asked. "The same," he answered laconically, expecting me to interpret his verbal shorthand correctly. I did, and laughingly dropped the subject. The best menu in the world, or the most detailed recipes for it, cannot survive an inept cook.

There are, nevertheless, recognizable elements in the art of the program. Variety is one, chronology another. Kinship may be one formula, diversity another. Two big works may be acceptable, if properly balanced. Four short ones may also appeal, if properly mated. Two short ones and a long one strike me, on inspection, as unbalanced. A strong novelty may survive juxtaposition with a pair of masterpieces. Weak novelties, as a matter of course, should be rejected, as should older pieces of the same order. Two novelties on the same program are rarely compatible, one tending to cancel out the impression made by the other. On the other hand, a whole program of contemporary music is not automatically disbarred, for a thoughtfully chosen sequence may crystallize some general impressions as well as expose specific ones. Haydn and Hindemith suggest a better blend than Franck and Shostakovich.

How one celebrated contemporary felt is conveyed by Richard Strauss's specifications in *Recollections and Reflections* for "Some Good Programs of My Works." I may say right off that an all-Strauss evening, unless he should reappear to conduct it himself, strikes me as repellent, but his sense of these matters is suggested by the following: *Don Quixote*

is balanced by *Ein Heldenleben*; another sequence offers the "Couperin" Suite, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and the *Sinfonia domestica*; a third the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Second Horn Concerto, and three tone poems in order of their composition—*Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration*. Each has balance and proportion, a beginning, a middle, and an end, which is the least an audience may expect.

To implement my own arguments, I submit half a dozen programs I would relish hearing:

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| (1) | <i>Le Tombeau de Couperin</i> | RAVEL |
| | Symphony No. 5 ("Lenore"), in E | RAFF |
| | Concerto No. 25, in C, K. 503 | MOZART |
| | <i>Danzas Fantásticas</i> | TURINA |
| | * * * | |
| (2) | Overture <i>Patrie</i> | BIZET |
| | Symphony No. 6, in C | SCHUBERT |
| | <i>Istar Variations</i> | D'INDY |
| | <i>Nightride and Sunrise</i> | SIBELIUS |
| | * * * | |
| (3) | Symphony No. 8, in F | BEETHOVEN |
| | Symphony No. 8, in C minor | BRUCKNER |
| | * * * | |
| (4) | Overture <i>Portsmouth Point</i> | WALTON |
| | <i>Rio Grande</i> | LAMBERT |
| | Suite for Strings (arranged by Barbirolli) | PURCELL |
| | <i>Appalachia</i> | DELIUS |
| | * * * | |
| (5) | Overture in D minor | HANDEL |
| | Concerto in A minor (for violin) | BACH |
| | Concerto in B flat (for cello) | VIVALDI |
| | Double Concerto in A minor | BRAHMS |
| | * * * | |

- (6) Overture *Le Corsair*
Symphony on a Mountain Air
(with solo piano)
-

BERLIOZ
D'INDY

Symphony No. 3 ("Espanziva")

NIELSEN

Were I charged with the needed authority, I would respect Beethoven's wish that the "*Eroica*" should always occur first in any evening of music on which it was performed. I would try to avoid programs made up of "movements": a Gluck-Mottl suite followed by a divertimento in five or six parts, a concerto, and a ballet suite. I would not mirror an austere novelty by a Blacher or a Dallapiccola in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* music or Debussy's *La Mer*. I would not consider Dukas, Lalo, Roussel, and Poulenc a friendly foursome simply because they all happen to be natives of France. An overture would almost always precede the first lengthy work, if only to take care of latecomers whose best intentions may be defeated by our traffic-laden cities.

The greatest conductors, history shows, are by no means the best program-makers. The presumption is that no matter what they do, the results will be so absorbing that sequence or affinity are not important. I would not say that G. B. Sammartini's Symphony No. 3, Haydn's D major (B. and H. No. 31), Tomasini's *Serenata Chiari di Luna*, Sibelius's *En Saga*, and a Martucci *Tarantella* was proper program-making, even though the conductor, on January 1, 1931, was Arturo Toscanini. When Victor de Sabata introduced himself to America with a program beginning with Berlioz's *Carnaval romain*, went on with the Franck Symphony, a Respighi-like orchestral fresco by Ghedini, and Ravel's *Boléro*, he was clearly less interested in Berlioz, Franck, Ghedini, and Ravel than he was in Victor de Sabata. Each

piece provided a climax more frenetic than the last, with a final afterglow, for the ear, recalling a fireworks display in which the eye ultimately sees no detail, but only a blur of color.

Not many men who call themselves musicians are as blatant as that in pursuit of effect, but it is demonstrable that the best programs have been, and are being, made by such lesser virtuosos as Damrosch and Henry Wood in the past, Barbirolli, Howard Mitchell, and Thomas Scherman in the present. We recognize certain defensive purposes involved, but enterprise is to be honored in any circumstance. I hasten to acknowledge such obvious exceptions as Stokowski and Beecham and Reiner, each in command of a vast range of materials, each with his own kind of imaginative resourcefulness in utilizing them.

My complaint, in general, relates not to substance, but to character. I think our audiences get far too much "meaningful" music and not enough that is pleasurable. I think most of our conductors are too much concerned with making an impression, too little with rendering a service. I think they have created second-class citizenship in the musical republic for a host of such composers as Grieg, Dvořák, Goldmark, Dukas, Borodin, Albéniz, Chabrier, Chausson, D'Indy, Weber, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Liszt. In every case, one overplayed piece (frequently a concerto or an overture) is made to serve for the man's whole output.

In response to the clamor of special interests, far more than a suitable proportion of effort is devoted to "novelties," mostly transitory in manner and ephemeral in content. The idea that composers have a "right" to be heard, that they may appraise their mistakes and learn to do better work, strikes me as the function of a conservatory or laboratory orchestra,

and not to be imposed on a paying public. Rather than performing contemporary music because it is big enough and worthy enough, favor often falls to the one piece short enough and sufficiently noncontroversial. What a given city knows of Vaughan Williams, for example, may often be determined by which symphony the conductor has happened to learn: the "London," "Pastoral," or F minor (No. 4). For a conductor to rotate the three of them over five seasons would mean either that his name is Barbirolli or Boult or that he is a traitor to his colleagues.

If Vaughan Williams be deemed too special a case, how often recently has New York or Boston heard Weber's *Preciosa Overture* among repetitions of the overtures to *Oberon*, *Euryanthe*, and *Der Freischütz*; Smetana's *Meadows and Forests* rather than the *Moldau*; Strauss's *Macbeth* in addition to *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel*; Liadov's *Kikimora*, *Baba Yaga*, or *Enchanted Lake*; the Slavonic Dances of Dvořák, or the *Orchestral Variations* or the *Golden Spinning Wheel*; Stravinsky's *Les Noces* instead of *Petrouchka*; Rimsky's *Ivan the Terrible Suite*; Respighi's *Old Airs and Dances* or *Boutique fantasque*; Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*; a Mozart serenade other than *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*; Chabrier's *Suite Pastorale*; the *Second Symphony* of Mendelssohn; or Goldmark's *Rustic Wedding*? And who decides that Grieg's *Peer Gynt* music and Massenet's *Scènes alsaciennes* are unworthy of symphony programs? Not the audience, certainly.

I would also propose a moratorium on soloists save for such works as Strauss's *Oboe Concerto*, Dohnányi's for violin, Poulenc's for organ, Vivaldi's for bassoon, viola d'amore, or cello, Falla's for harpsichord, Haydn's for trumpet, Mozart's for French horn, flute, or bassoon, Nielsen's for clarinet, Hindemith's for cello, Handel's for organ and orchestra,

Ibert's for saxophone, Glière's for harp, Fauré's *Ballade* (with piano), Cimarosa's Concerto for two flutes, Sir Arthur Bliss's for violin, Walton's for viola, or Rawsthorne's for piano. When these have been absorbed, we might go on to those by Egk (with soprano solo), Egge (piano), Tippett, Rózsa, Rakov, and Schönberg, which have a claim on our attentions also.

The attractiveness of hearing such music properly performed is exceeded only by the improbability of its happening. To have the basic repertory and the needed "novelties" and the "handy" pieces in sufficient stock to undertake the preparation of such "oddities" argues many things: a long tenure for the conductor, with its sense of security, freedom from constant need to make an effect, from the pressure of keeping an audience "interested." On the day when some of our conductors discover that it is easier to keep an audience interested in music than in conducting, we may see the emergence of a new Beecham or Damrosch. I much prefer the one, but sometimes I think that I would settle for the other.

♦ *LIFE BEGINS AT FORTE*

THE LATE Walter Pitkin had no musical inclinations known to me, but the title of his famous book, given a new setting in a different key, sums up more than a few trends in contemporary music-making. For one reason or another, the art of playing piano (whether on the piano, the violin, the voice, or the orchestra) has virtually vanished.

The phrase "one reason or another" is really an evasion, for there is one fundamental reason. To put the matter bluntly, a caste system has come into existence under which the best artists are regarded as those who can fill the largest halls. This is quite different from the assumption that the public is attracted in largest numbers to hear the best artists. The late John McCormack, for example, attracted such a wide following that neither the bygone Hippodrome nor the soon-to-be-bygone Carnegie Hall was too large for it. But the artistry that McCormack provided was as fine-spun and restrained in the Hippodrome as it was elsewhere, under other circumstances.

One does not have to reach back very far to recall the time when artists of the magnitude of Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Harold Bauer, Myra Hess, Wilhelm Backhaus, and Benno Moiseiwitch were content to match the size of their musical picture to a suitable physical frame, in New York's Aeolian Hall of special memories or Town Hall. Backhaus, Hess, and Moiseiwitch have given all their recent recitals in Carnegie Hall.

The first fine careless judgment would be that music has so grown in public appreciation, that the clamor for tickets is

now so great, that only the largest available hall will suffice. That, I regret to inform anyone not familiar with the facts, is largely an illusion. Most concerts in New York (as in London, I am sure) are played at a loss, for the sake of getting notices—favorable ones, naturally—with which to impress out-of-town managers. Backhaus, Hess, and Moiseivitch do not require such assistance at this point of their careers—but it is a revealing fact that Guiomar Novaës, who does not do much touring, finds Town Hall still to her liking when she brings her cultured, resonant art to New York.

The “Carnegie Hall recital,” indeed, has become as much a symbol of one sort as the “Carnegie Library” is of another. Whereas the library exists by public funds, the recital is usually financed by private ones—the performer’s. As a symbol of top achievement, “Carnegie Hall” undoubtedly has a meaning to the country which “Town Hall” has not. The symbol can be hired, if the favorable notices cannot.

The sad fact is, however, that the number of performers who can challenge, successfully, the dimensions of the larger auditorium is even smaller than the number of those who can successfully challenge the tolerance of the critics. Many a performer who could show himself to advantage in Town Hall comes a cropper in Carnegie because: (1) he is inclined to choose works suitable for the hall, rather than for his talent; (2) he unnecessarily handicaps himself in pursuing the elusive objective.

Among these the most common is the one least suspected: the instrument on which the performance is given. The art of performing on a concert grand is subtler than the art of performing (merely) on a good-sounding smaller piano. Young pianists, particularly—no matter how gifted or how glib technically—rarely have had enough experience to permit

a concert grand's resonant bass to speak freely or to control its bright treble. Those who have had a certain amount of experience have usually selected as their model the unique Vladimir Horowitz, for no sounder reason than that he, being the most successful pianist of the generation they recognize as their own, must necessarily be the best.

When imitating the inimitable, the most common procedure is to seek for brilliance and more brilliance at the peril of everything else. The first endeavor is to make the piano sound as much as possible like the Horowitz piano (which, when he is not using it, is kept under lock and key—save when he offers it as a special favor to his friend and older colleague, Artur Schnabel). To a large extent, Horowitz creates the sound associated with him out of enormous power rigorously controlled. His emulators lack both the power and the control, so the likeness must come from the instrument rather than from themselves.

It may be surprising to discover that the quality of a piano can be altered, modified, or made over through "voicing." The term was derived from organ-building. Its pianistic application relates to the way in which the felts are shaped and how they strike the strings—whether they have been compressed to uncommon hardness in order to produce "more immediate sound" (brilliance) or permitted to have the normal texture for "less immediate sound" (mellowness). The other tricks of this trade need not be revealed, but they are many. A passage played on a "brilliant" piano will give an illusion of speed not conveyed by the same passage at the same tempo on a more "mellow" instrument.

Having accepted the obligation to play in the largest hall, on an instrument not congenial to him, the aspiring performer can hardly resist the further temptation of playing

music that puts him at a final disadvantage. The simple fact is that after one hundred years of intensive exploitation, the pianist has become a victim of his instrument's resources. Passage of time has made it the solo instrument par excellence, the one to which nearly every composer has turned his thoughts when not occupied with the symphony orchestra. Debussy and Ravel created one system of sonorities, Prokofiev and Kabalevsky another. Bartók gave it a special character, as did Schönberg. In the image of Rachmaninoff, it is one thing, in that of Gershwin, another.

By comparison, even the singer who has to live with the cruel demands imposed by Wagner and Strauss has an easier time of it. Within the several ranges of vocal specialization accepted for each sex, further subdivisions are not merely recognized, but encouraged. A *basso cantante* is not expected to do the work of a *buffo*, any more than one who sings Isolde is also expected to sing Pamina. Tenors who perform Almaviva in *Il Barbiere* may be brothers under the skin to those who sing Canio in *Pagliacci*, but they occupy different bodies and draw different pay checks at the performance's end.

Nevertheless, it is the rigorous attitude of the public—encouraged, I regret to say, by most critics (including myself, on occasions)—that a pianist, to have a durable place in the hierarchy, must pass muster not only in the loudest and fastest music, but also in the softest and the slowest. It is all very well if he can play Liszt, but how is his Beethoven? Schubert's *Impromptus* show one side of a man's musicality, but what of his Scriabin? He can play the Prokofiev *Toccata*; can he also play Schumann's, and Bach's, and Galuppi's?

Perhaps it is reasonable to pose the ultimate tests for the ultimate interpreters (although it is a striking fact that when

an interpreter with the physical powers to undertake such challenges appears, he is usually wise enough to know his own temperamental limitations). But for a performer of smaller stature (and fewer gifts) to assume the obligation voluntarily is to look disaster in the face.

It would, indeed, be a sounder risk for some ambitious newcomer to do what practically no pianist in my experience has dared do: use not one, but two (or perhaps three) pianos for a single program, matching the specifications of the instrument to the needs of the music. It is not considered dishonorable for a conductor to reduce the strings of the usual orchestra if he determines that is the best way to achieve his objective in a work of Bach or Haydn or Mozart. Why should it be a matter for derision if a pianist were to seek such a purely mechanical adjustment? The test, after all, is not merely man against machine: it is also the quest of man for musical meaning. Which machine he uses, or its dimensions, need hardly concern the listener save as adding to or detracting from the result.

After discussing this matter on one occasion in print, I was advised by a Fellow of the Acoustical Society of America what the root of all evil is! "Pianists are more and more becoming players of concerti, which means that the piano is more and more called upon to produce a tonal output capable of cutting through the sound of a symphony orchestra. Who cares for beautiful sound any more, save a few remainders of the older generation? What we want is to play the latest Russian concerto as loudly and as fast as possible. Poor piano-forte! Had we better not drop off now the first syllable of its name and call it Forte, rather than Piano?"

Out of a considerable background, my correspondent continued: "If I could have my way, I should possess an Erard

of 1885, a Broadwood of 1890 (barless), a Steinway of 1910, and a Mason and Hamlin of the same date. These four among them would fill the entire possible, practicable range of pianoforte tone, from the woody sweetness of the old Erard to the organ-like glory of the Mason and Hamlin at their best." Whether or not the two facts coincide, it is symptomatic of some change that as such performers as Gabrilowitsch and Bauer have disappeared, so has the Mason and Hamlin, which they preferred to play.

The debits chargeable to the large hall, the unsuitable instrument, and the demands of an enormous literature are, paradoxically, not confined to the music played. They also influence the music that is not played. Who plays the suites of Rameau or the clavier pieces of Couperin, the literature of Mozart or Schubert (rather than a few excerpts from them)? Leopold Godowsky's fascinating transcriptions of Schubert songs, with their contrapuntal interplay, were an absorbing experience when heard in a hall of suitable dimensions. Who could hear them halfway back in Carnegie Hall or in the upper tier of boxes? The best performance of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy I have yet had the pleasure of hearing was by the late Moritz Rosenthal. A world-wide celebrity for two generations, he performed it in Town Hall. Years before that he played the F minor Concerto of Chopin in a manner never to be forgotten, for the Friends of Music with Artur Bodanzky conducting, also in Town Hall. It was memorable not for agility, for power, or for bravura—though it had all of these in abundance—but for the quietest, most singing, barely audible pianissimo in the slow movement.

When Carnegie Hall is no more, and something worse has taken its place, others may look back upon it as some have looked back on Aeolian Hall, and Steinway Hall before it—

as a haven for an intimacy no longer possible elsewhere. This possibility occurred to me when I asked a formidable virtuoso why he didn't play some of the things I have mentioned. "In Texas I must play for six thousand people," he said. "When I play for six thousand people I have to have a program for six thousand people. I cannot play little pieces." Here, it appears, the concepts of Andrew Carnegie are being overtaken and passed by those of Dale Carnegie.

♦ FAREWELL TO THE CHACONNE

THOSE whose concertgoing is casual, who attend only programs of personal interest to them and are largely unaware that any other kind exists, have little awareness of the abuses suffered by those whose attendance is decreed by the mere fact that such and such a concert hall is open on a given evening. To speak of "abuses" endured by those who willingly embark on the career of music-reporting may seem to stretch self-indulgence unduly, but a man might conceivably aspire to be a doctor without taking into account the times he will be wakened at three a.m. to minister to a patient whose complaint could as well be treated by a self-administered tablespoon of bicarbonate.

There comes the inevitable time when all the violinists, or all the pianists, or all the orchestras suddenly have a mind to play the same piece in the same season. This is a relatively innocent form of annoyance when the impulse is confined to violinists, or pianists, or orchestras: one merely avoids pianists, or violinists, or orchestras until the inflammation subsides, the infection is no longer at large, and concert halls are safe again. But when the work can be played not only by violinists, but also by pianists and orchestras—then one can only put a ban on the piece itself.

Few works (fortunately) conform to such a description, but merely one of them is sufficient to disrupt the otherwise orderly mind of a reviewer. Such a one, of course, is the Chaconne from the D minor Partita (for violin alone) of Bach. To say more than Chaconne, for that matter, is to deal

in tautology, as to speak of Cervantes as Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. There may be another Cervantes, as in fact there are other chaconnes. But this is mere word-jugglery, for a Cervantes is *the* Cervantes, as a chaconne is *the* Chaconne.

According to a well-regarded rule of the ages, "*Chacun à son goût*." In such a season as comes, alas, as well as goes, the saying may be revised to read: "*Chaconne à son goût*," which means that it is, all at once, a piece to the taste of every one as no other piece is. Why this is so deserves investigation, even if to produce conclusions no more than philosophic.

Let me begin by saying that it takes much to turn this swan among musical fauna into an ugly duckling. The first time the Chaconne is heard properly played, it beams a mighty light on the musical landscape. The tenth and the twentieth times, the light grows more intense, the power of the mind that conceived it ever more imposing. So, indeed, to the fiftieth and the hundredth hearing.

By the time, however, when the hearings become as commonplace as the average performance of it, the fascination it exerts for the performer becomes, more than the thing itself, the matter at issue. Surely there are other works as expressive which are neither so lengthy nor so arduous; there are, indeed, any number of slow movements by Bach himself which would exhibit as much of the capacity of the performer without revealing so much of his incapacity.

Violinists, of course, learn the Chaconne much as Latin students learn the fourth declension. It is a part of the grammar of fiddling to which weeks and months—perhaps even a year—of study are devoted before the votary is ready for the next exercise in his novitiate. Unfortunately, the parallel with Latin is all too close, for the common view is to regard the Chaconne as something out of a dead language.

Considering its importance in the lives of violinists, their teachers, and their teachers' teachers, we might reasonably regard absorption with the Chaconne as a kind of musical atavism, a repetition of something that flows in the blood of those who live by the bow and strings. Like the devils that primitive peoples believe to inhabit humans, it must be cast out of the body before the accursed can be considered purified. That, however, is just what does not happen. The Chaconne remains buried within the violinist, a torment and a challenge as long as he can tuck a fiddle under his chin.

Like many other trite and overtried things, it began with a worthy man, with a zealot's impulse. For unless all the indications are inaccurate, it was Joseph Joachim (who gave intellectual status to the trade of violinist as Nicolò Paganini gave it overtones of mystery and excitement) to whom the Chaconne first appealed for public performance as Bach wrote it. The distinction is not without importance, for Mendelssohn—out of the depth of his enthusiasm for Bach and certainly out of his friendship for Ferdinand David (to whom he dedicated his own Violin Concerto)—provided the Chaconne with a piano accompaniment in the manner of one adding arms to the Venus of Milo. A public performance of Mendelssohn's version so stirred Robert Schumann that he provided all six partitas and sonatas with accompaniments, confidently inscribing a copy to Joachim as "the best interpreter of this miraculous music." With all regard for his good friend, Joachim was not disposed to invite participation of another in one of the relatively few works in which a violinist is self-sufficient, and refused to perform Schumann's version. It is a theory long held in card-playing circles that *solitaire* is hardly the same game with a partner.

In his work of proselytizing for the true gospel as he be-

why should Franz Liszt, in a letter of January 13, 1868, written to the celebrated Jessie Laussot, have said: "Joachim has naïvely confessed to me that after he had played the Beethoven and Mendelssohn concertos and the Bach Chaconne he did not know what to do with himself in a town unless it was to go on playing indefinitely the same two concertos and the same Chaconne"?

It was, apparently, a time in which the "mighty beam" was first coming to bear on the public in the concert hall, and many were dazzled by it. Not to be outdone, perhaps, by Joachim, in 1869 Brahms made an arrangement of it for the left hand alone. This at least had the virtue of preserving the relative difficulties as Bach conceived them (though the fixed intonation of the piano plainly eliminates one of the major obstacles in the violinist's way to eloquence). He delighted, he wrote at one time, in playing the work for himself, in correlating and integrating its contrapuntal complexities for his own musical pleasure.

At about the same time, Hans von Bülow, at his ducal position in Meiningen, was creating the framework for the figure called the "prima donna conductor." The indefatigable Liszt commented in a letter of April 17, 1874, to Karl Riedel: "In case my *Faust* Symphony is given at the fifth program [of a festival in Brunswick], I beg you to ask Bülow to be conductor. This work has become his property since he conducted it so magnificently at the Weimar Tonkünstler-Versammlung ('61) when the whole orchestra was amazed and astounded at his fabulous memory. You will remember that not only did he not use a score, but at the rehearsal referred to the numberless *letters* and *double letters* * with unerring accuracy."

* Markings placed throughout a score to make location of passages easy during rehearsal.

As Liszt is our witness, Bülow was the predecessor of some conductors of our time not only in this respect, but also in the performance of solo works by multiple performers. Writing of his impressions of Meiningen in 1883, Liszt comments: "An extraordinary thing! The most difficult quartet of Beethoven, one which on account of its complications never figures on any programme, the Grand Fugue, opus 133, is played by the Meiningen Orchestra with a perfect ensemble. On a previous occasion I also heard at Meiningen Bach's celebrated Chaconne played in unison with a real virtuosity by some ten violins."

In their several ways, Joachim, Brahms, and Bülow were rendering tribute to a musical masterpiece that was still fresh to them—the most sophisticated musicians of the time—and necessarily to the public. But between rendering tribute and collecting indemnity there is a wide gulf. What Brahms saw as a problem in complexity for one hand becomes a gross travesty in Ferruccio Busoni's elaboration (1916) for two hands. In their new form, the designs no longer have the significance Bach intended, any more than a ballet leap survives unchanged when executed on ice skates. The sweeping melodic lines suitable to the bow completely elude performance on the piano. I have heard it said by pianists that playing Busoni's transcription is "fun." If so, it must be akin to the pleasures of eating—not transferable to anyone else.

In even grosser measure, the enlargement imposed on the work by Leopold Stokowski in his fantasy for orchestra is leagues away from the practice initiated by Bülow. The latter, undoubtedly, was proud of his string section's ability to play the difficult work like one man: Stokowski's version might make an orchestra ashamed of sharing the difficulties in a way one man would never concede. It roars and it swells; it

pounds and it declaims—but it never achieves the one thing Bach intended: individual self-expression. In this instance of musical elephantiasis or tonal gigantism, trombones “*sul G*” menacingly and eight-fingered clarinetists armed with stops and keys, replace the violinist’s four. No.

Considering the lengths to which conductors will go to avoid “interesting” programs, I offer without charge my suggestion for an all-Chaconne program permitting the use of an all-star cast. It could begin with one violinist doing the authentic, unaccompanied version, followed by two violinists playing the duet edition that caused Joachim to burst into a room of the Berlin Hochschule to discover the identity of the “man” who could execute its double stops without breaking a chord. Next a pianist would play the Brahms version for left hand.

It would now be time for an intermission, during which Andrés Segovia would entertain in the foyer with his version for guitar. Then, with the piano-for-left-hand-alone replaced by one for both hands, Busoni’s handiwork would be performed. It might be followed by Emanuel Vardi’s arrangement for string ensemble. Finally, of course, the whole orchestra would conclude with the Stokowski transcription. This would take ninety minutes, including applause, if any—rather lengthy as orchestral programs go in this country. However, I suspect that it would not cause the audience undue pangs, for it would be accompanied by activity suggestive in reverse of that connected with the Haydn “Farewell” Symphony: as the number of players increased, the number of listeners would decrease.

♦ CADENZA ON CADENZAS

LIKE the three buttons on either sleeve of a man's coat, cadenzas continue to be dutifully attached to the standard concertos of the instrumental literature, though few know why they are there or what purpose they originally served. Scarcely a week passes in our concert halls (and "our" may be interpreted to mean those of music-lovers wherever Western musical literature is purveyed) without a conductor folding his arms, baton in hand, when in the first or third movement the soloist reaches the traditional "grand pause" and the programed composer is joined by another, unannounced.

More often than not the other composer—whether his name is Reinecke or Saint-Saëns, Joachim or Wilhelmj—will not even be formally introduced to the guests, but will be treated like any poor relation at a fashionable party. He is present because he is a necessary if obscure part of the proceedings, without which the interpreter would not be able to complete his evening's work. In a strict interpretation of the performer's contract (stricter, that is, than the one the performer is giving of the concerto), failure to play a cadenza might even be a cause for nonpayment.

It is much as though at the climax of "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I" Hamlet paused, the lights came up, and he walked down to the footlights, where he rapidly recited: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." Then he would take it backwards: "Peppers pickled of peck a picked Piper Peter." Then from the middle to each end and so on.

This would bear about as much relationship to Shakespeare's English as the average humdrum elaboration of concerto "themes" in a cadenza bears to Beethoven or Mozart. It would merely prove that the actor could mouth, rapidly, any random set of syllables as well as deliver Shakespeare's majestic thoughts with understanding and eloquence.

Why, you may ask, should it be necessary for a Hamlet to prove his glibness at nonsense when the whole purpose of the performance is to demonstrate his art with good sense? That, precisely, is the point of the analogy. It should not be necessary in the concert hall any more than it is in the theater. The only difference, by and large, is with the audience. Those who care enough about *Hamlet* to spend an evening in the company of an Olivier or a Gielgud are qualified, by heritage and education, to detect the nuances of thought, the gradations of inflection the actors apply to Shakespeare. Only a small part of the audience that regularly gathers for symphony concerts, I regret to say, has an equal familiarity with the musical language. Otherwise they would have long since banished many of the inanities to which they are regularly subject.

Even the "Peter Piper" sort of thing would make sense (of a limited sort) if our virtuosos performed a witless elaboration of their own of Beethoven or Mozart materials. Then, at least, they would be conforming to the understanding implied when a composer of the "classical" period provided such an opportunity. It was assumed that at this point in a concerto the performing artist, in a flight of eloquence and inspiration induced by association with a masterwork, would put forth some improvisatory comment of his own on the ideas he had been expounding. There was a crashing chord to set him adrift; later, a gangplank trill would welcome him back from his little self-conducted journey.

Oddly enough, it was Beethoven—an innovator and organizer in so many other ways—who said both the first and the last word on cadenzas. But even as Scripture can be cited by the devil to serve his own purposes, so the virtuosos can use the early Beethoven, who wrote cadenzas for Mozart concertos, to defend their own laziness. It was Beethoven the pianist who wrote the cadenzas for Mozart's D minor Concerto: they were for his own use. It was Beethoven the pianist who wrote cadenzas for his own first three concertos when he was still a performing virtuoso. It was Beethoven the composer, no longer introducing his own works to the public, who wrote out every note of the E flat ("Emperor") Concerto and clarified his purpose completely by directing: "*Non si fa una Cadenza, ma s'attacca subito il seguente*" ("Do not make a cadenza, but attack the following immediately.") It was Beethoven the pianist, not yet exclusively a composer, who had left a space in the preceding G major (No. 4) Concerto with the hopeful expression: "*La Cadenza sia corta*" ("The cadenza to be short.")

However, if performers systematically disregard Beethoven's musical instructions, why should they be more conscientious about his verbal ones? Some of the most gruesome excursions into irrelevance I have encountered in the concert hall have been in this very Fourth Concerto, whose proportions otherwise are of a balance and proportion that might well be called Grecian. One might even imagine, in it, that Beethoven was giving the performers of his time one last chance, that some unhappy experience prompted him to the procedure of the "Emperor": no cadenzas save those he wrote himself, an example followed by Schumann and Mendelssohn, Grieg and Brahms.

However, the earlier Beethoven can always be cited against himself. Chopin wrote cadenzas for Beethoven, as Beethoven had written them for Mozart. Busoni trod in the footsteps of Beethoven, Saint-Saëns in those of Chopin. And a host of lesser hands provided other merchandise to answer the market demand, as conservatories of the nineteenth century turned out the specialized breed of musical pet called the virtuoso. In their dull, specialized way, the virtuosos have been only too happy to accept any accessible solution to the recurrent dilemma over what to do when the "grand pause" comes.

It was not a profound surprise during a recent hearing of Beethoven's C minor Concerto (No. 3) to discover that the string of platitudes on which the pearls of Beethoven's thought were stranded in the cadenza preferred by Alexander Brailowsky was the work of Ignaz Moscheles. Once held in high regard by Beethoven himself, and by many others, including Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Schumann, Moscheles did not tax himself unduly in these enterprises of his later years. In a letter of 1854, he wrote: "Meanwhile I employ myself writing cadenzas for Beethoven's concertos, which Snuff intends to publish. Of course, self-reliant artists, able to write for themselves, have no need of these; they can follow their own inspirations. I hope, however, to make myself useful to less gifted executants. . . ."

This Third Concerto is something of a special stumbling block, not only for the executant, but also for the critic, as I discovered several years ago. Having characterized a cadenza played by Claudio Arrau as "humdrum," I was amused to receive from him several days later a rather nervous communication reading, in part: "I am overwhelmed at having

been the indirect cause of a rather bad slip in your comment on cadenzas. That unworthy 'humdrum' cadenza which you scold me for injecting into the Beethoven piano concerto was written by none other than Beethoven himself. I hope this correction is not too embarrassing to you."

I hastened to assure Arrau, through our channel of communication (the printed page), that critics are not loath to recognize that on several occasions, Beethoven wrote music he himself later loathed ("What an ass you were" was his comment late in life on the popular C minor Variations for piano). The implications were that if I had known that the cadenza was by Beethoven, I would not have found it humdrum. The certain fact is that Beethoven wrote his most-played cadenza for the C minor Concerto long after its composition, and the stylistic variation is considerable.

There is an old critical formula reading: Don't be too severe with the music of royalty, for you never can tell who wrote it. The same might be applied, in self-defense, to unidentified cadenzas. What, I suspect, Beethoven was deploing in his later look at the C minor Variations was empty virtuoso display—a pointless subject for attentive listening in any circumstance—as I was in the cadenza for the C minor Concerto.

A notable exception to performers whom Moscheles would have assigned to the category of "less gifted executants" is Fritz Kreisler. His two splendid cadenzas for the Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos were so superior to their passé predecessors (including those of Joachim) that more than a few violinists spent hours copying them from the phonograph records on which they first appeared. They have, of course, long since become generally available in print, demonstrating unmistakably Kreisler's shrewdness in realizing certain con-

trapuntal possibilities overlooked by several generations of violinists and other cadenza-writers.

In the aftermath of the acclaim that Kreisler realized wherever he played Beethoven and Brahms, it became something of a point of honor for his prideful contemporaries (Albert Spalding, Jascha Heifetz, and Nathan Milstein for certain, possibly others as well) also to prepare their own cadenzas. The subtle distinction is that Kreisler's are played by violinists other than their composer. The only comparable example I can think of is Robert Casadesus, whose cadenzas for several Mozart piano concertos have been performed by others, including the finicky Rudolf Serkin. Among them is one for the great C major Concerto (K. 503), a work that Artur Rubinstein once told me he did not play because "there is no good cadenza for it." Whether he would amend his opinion on behalf of Casadesus, I would hardly inquire. One pianist's "good" can be (even as a critic's) another pianist's "humdrum."

However, a further point of Rubinstein's comment is not irrelevant: "I suppose the best thing would be to go out and improvise a cadenza, but that might be dangerous." Concert life has become so regulated, formalized, and designed to produce the predictable (if not the expectable) that anything related to the spur of the moment is regarded with misgiving. Suppose that Rubinstein, in the midst of performing a Mozart concerto during a broadcast with the New York Philharmonic were to become host to the spirit of the composer, which directed him to improvise a magical cadenza (even as he sometimes did himself) spun out to ten, fifteen, or even twenty minutes of heavenly music never before heard. Obviously the total timing of the program would be seriously disrupted; and if it chanced that Mozart picked the

wrong time and movement for his visit (the third movement, if the concerto was scheduled to conclude the broadcast), it might be cut off the air in mid-phrase.

In the circumstances, it would be better for the virtuoso to follow the "grand pause" with a few simple modulatory chords, or simply rap the music rack with his knuckles in the equivalent of the cardplayer's "I pass." This would save considerable valuable time, conserve space on a recording, and earn him the gratitude of all music-lovers who can distinguish between Shakespeare and "Peter Piper."

♦ A VIOLINIST OF PARTS

THE MAKING of composites has been a favorite pastime of writers for ages, whether it has been Shakespeare chanting a witches' brew with eye of newt and toe of frog or W. S. Gilbert finding peak-haunting Peverl and Dr. Satcheverell somehow inseparable from a Heavy Dragoon. Beauties and boxers, statesmen and clowns, all have had their best elements extracted and combined with others, so why not musicians?

Pondering some of the imponderables of the fiddler's art, it occurred to me that among today's leading exponents of the instrument, each has a special quality that another lacks. It may be this, indeed, which establishes his personality and the individuality of his art. What would it be like if a montage of these salient qualities could be assembled into a superman of the bow and strings? Where to begin, and how to proceed?

Others might elect otherwise, but my starting point would be the left hand of Heifetz for its wizard skill and surety. A model of deportment when it was first shown to the Western world nearly forty years ago, it has, if anything, only gained in craft as time has passed. To complement it I would choose the right arm of Mischa Elman, whose superlative sense of pressure enables him to draw from the instrument a sound that has remained unique as generations of competitors have come and gone. Put with them the greatness of heart which made Kreisler's music-making unsurpassed for mellowness mixed with ardor. The questing mind of Szigeti, fervent in

its pursuit of musical values new and old, would add to the total, no doubt.

But we are still only at the beginning, dealing in the physical facts of fiddling: what we call the "heart" of Kreisler and the "mind" of Szigeti, like the fingers of Heifetz and the bow arm of Elman, become of consequence to us only as they are translated into sound. Our paragon would want the rugged attack of Menuhin and the refinement of Grumiaux, the flaming intensity of Ricci and the even spirit of Szymon Goldberg, the poetic flair Enesco made known to us, the solidity and breadth pervading everything to which Nathan Milstein turns his attentions. He would then be in a fair way to carve some sort of unique niche for himself in musical history.

He still would be an imperfect object. He would not have the scholarship of Joseph Fuchs or the tangy brilliance of Francescatti. The passionate philosophizing about music which still speaks to us from the records of Bronislaw Huberman would be lacking, as would the earnestness of Isaac Stern. Missing, too, would be the chamber music mastery of Jean Pasquier, the nectarish tone of Norbert Brainin of the Amadeus Quartet, the special sense of style which André Gertler brings to the Berg Concerto, Erica Morini to Wieniawski, Siegfried Borries to Busoni, Leonid Kogan to Sarasate—or, for that matter, Toscha Seidel to "Intermezzo." Pursuing the matter for a few notches further, he would remain at a loss—with all this and Paganini too—in a competition with Eddie South, the Jascha of jazz.

A violin is a violin and a master of it should encompass its challenge in any form. He should be able to equal Franz Clement, to whom Beethoven first inscribed his Violin Concerto, by playing a fantasy with the instrument held upside

down. He should command the skill Magne Manheim, the Norwegian virtuoso, exhibited on the "Hardengar fiddle" (which has a total of eight strings, all combining to produce a nasal tone) hard by the fjord of the same name at a recent Bergen Festival. How else could he cope with Geirr Tveitt's Concerto for the "Hardengar fiddle" and orchestra, which should obviously be in his repertory?

As a matter of course, he should equal Roman Totenberg's skill in playing the unaccompanied sonatas of Bach with a curved bow, permitting him to sound the four strings simultaneously. This would be of welcome service in covering the total literature of the instrument, a feat necessarily within the scope of the all-purpose virtuoso. And, to show that modern man has devised some felicities unknown to Bach, he should command the variation on the curved bow devised by Joe Venuti of popular fame. In this the four strings also produce simultaneous sound, but the hair, detached from its usual place at the frog, is wrapped across the strings, with the stick beneath the belly of the violin, and the bow then held tightly in the right fist.

Would he require the intellectual brilliance of the late Albert Einstein, or the statesmanship of Benito Mussolini? These, and the qualities of Charles Chaplin and other *farceurs* who have made themselves known as violinists might be questionable specifications, but he should certainly have Walter Starkie's knowledge of the Romany life if he is to function as an equal among the specialists the author of *Raggle Taggle* and *Don Gypsy* met in his travels. The inordinate command demonstrated by David Oistrakh in his playing of Paganini's Variations on a Theme from Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, for the G string alone should be his starting point.

Boxing the compass of violinistic talent the world has known is a feasible thing if you are doing it only in fantasy. Adding a limb from here and a joint from there to make an object of perfection is no trick at all, if figures of speech are the only things you sculpt. But my conclusion is that when you are all through, your bloomin' idol, like Kipling's, would be made of mud, with feet of clay to boot.

He would be perfect, and thus infallible. Being infallible, he would be without human failings, and what kind of music could he communicate without the most important qualification of all: identity with his fellow men? Sour grapes, Aesop would grumble, because you can't have him anyway. But the moral to this particular fable is a different one. If you, taking the best of the best, can't compose perfection on paper, to a really useful result, what right have we to demand it of one single individual, on a given night, in a concert hall?

The answer is, of course, none. Let us recognize, then, that sufficient unto the day is the virtuoso thereof.

♦ THE PHONOGRAPHIC MEMORY

LARGELY speaking, the postwar musical scene is composed of the same elements (with different names) as composed the preceding one, with one notable exception. In addition to the prodigies of the violin and piano who erupt from time to time like a manifestation of an unpredictable Mother Nature of the arts, we have had a series of striplings—some of European origin, some of domestic—who have been promoted as prodigies of the baton. In some instances they have succeeded in reaching the stage of Carnegie Hall, the Paris Opéra, London's Royal Festival Hall, gravely "directing" the playing of a major orchestra.

We have had, in many instances, detailed accounts of their studies, the effort expended to master "repertory" before the conductor reached the sere and yellow age of ten, the masters of the conductor's art to whom he gives allegiance. I would have welcomed one detail more—what phonograph he used for working purposes, and from whose version of the Beethoven Fifth he learned the conductorial motions. This may be regarded as a typical thought of a cynical age, but it cannot be a mere coincidence that such prodigies—whether named Pierino Gamba, Ferruccio Burco, or Joey Alfidi (who was seven when he faced the Symphony of the Air on November 18, 1956)—have emerged in a time when mechanical reproduction of orchestral music has been accessible as never before.

It was once considered the ultimate of all things desirable for a conductor to have what was called a "photographic memory." Through his concentration on the printed page,

the elements of the score would become so fixed in his mind that they could be recalled at will by summoning up the mental image of the page itself. The late Arturo Toscanini was, of course, the instance par excellence of such faculty in our time, but it is quite clear (see page 39) that it all began with Hans von Bülow more than seventy-five years ago. At one time, it was regarded as so much a part of a proper conductor's qualifications that men otherwise of sound judgment considered themselves obligated to perform without a score, though it was a severe strain on their functioning. With Toscanini's retirement and death, it is instructive to observe the gradual reappearance of music stand and score where they had long been absent.

For the prodigies of today, however, the whole procedure has been enormously simplified. It is far simpler and more direct to hear the music so often from a recording that its sound is fixed in the ear and the score becomes a mere device for recalling the arrangement of symbols involved. Given such a "phonographic memory," the repertory available to a conductor is, of course, limitless.

I have no objection to such assistance. Indeed, I am heartily in favor of any and all means by which the repertory can be enlarged, the range of musical experience available to the public expanded, the round of familiar pieces extended by the inclusion of others as worthy (in some instances, more worthy)—assuming, of course, that the conductor has command of the tools of his craft. This would include, as an indispensable preliminary, the ability to conduct a rehearsal as well as a performance.

It is no particular problem for a gifted child to learn how to beat time to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, to point to this choir or that at the appropriate moment, even to appear to be

"inspired" by the music he is interpreting. A child's aptitude for mimicry can be turned to almost any endeavor in which his interest is aroused. But the skill and knowledge and authority to make an orchestra play something his way are half a lifetime's work to acquire, the other half's to perfect. Why otherwise, would Rimsky-Korsakov say, of a performance directed by Berlioz at the age of sixty-four: "Conducting is a thing shrouded in mystery," or Richard Strauss discourse on the age-old struggle for supremacy between leader and performers, or Artur Rodzinski state, as a matter of course: "Part of the sport is seeing how good you are, whether it's worth giving you anything or not. . . . In five minutes you have either passed the examination or failed, and everyone knows it."

In a spirit of curiosity I made the effort, several years ago, to attend a rehearsal preceding a concert to be given in Carnegie Hall by members of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Ferruccio Burco. On the usual podium, built up a few feet by an extra box, was the youthful maestro, in black shorts and white-collared shirt, his curly hair in disarray, his legs bare. Seated on a chair beside him was his mentor, a Rathboneish-looking Italian named Rossi.

It was Burco who started the orchestra in such pieces as the Prelude to *Traviata*, Rossini's *William Tell* Overture, Berlioz's "Rákóczy March," Beethoven's First Symphony, and the *Meistersinger* Prelude. It was Rossi who did the occasional stopping, with Burco, after whispered conversations with his Svengali, conveying his "wishes" to the players. Gamely enough, the scholars of the Philharmonic behaved like gentlemen, even though they were doing 95 per cent of the work.

Burco has an instinctive sense of pace, a feeling for melody which lets it follow a natural course, and a nervous twitching of the left hand which suggested that he was fingering the pieces on a violin as they were being played. None of this displeased the men, and they gave a hearty little "bravo" when the end of the *William Tell* Overture was reached in good order. About the only positive influence Burco exercised on the playing was to hold back the cellos when they started to run a little.

When time came for a break, Burco clambered down from the stand, one box at a time, and skipped off into the wings. Opinion of him among the players was candid and varied. "What a sweet face," said one. "He should be out playing ball in Central Park," said another. "Did you notice the Italian beat?" commented a third. "Some of the boys in the back didn't catch on right away." (The reference was to his habit of marking the second beat by a motion to the right, with a longer swing to the left for the third—a practice descended from the opera pit, where a long swing to the right for the third beat would risk contact with a music stand). "Typical *Wunderkind*," added still another. "In a few years the *Wunder* will be gone and only the *Kind* will remain."

Browsing about the stage, I noticed that the conductor's stand held full scores of the Beethoven, Wagner, and Berlioz works. The others were piano reductions, suggesting how qualified he was to instruct the players in any fine points they contained. In truth, he barely looked at either while doing his gymnastics, so it hardly mattered much. Burco had now come down from the conductor's room and was watching a rearrangement of the stage in accordance with Rossi's directions. The basses and cellos, which had been on the right, were shifted to the left in accordance with Continental pro-

cedure. Tiring of these minutiae, Burco discovered the side curtains hanging in voluminous folds, and spent a few minutes playing peekaboo, poking his head out and swishing the curtains closed at whoever passed.

Somebody had spoken to him about his beat, and he made an effort to change over to the usual Franco-German manner in the Beethoven symphony that followed. Consulting a sheet of paper before him with phonetic equivalents of English words, he said: "Plis. Numbar vun. Plis—no repetition, in numbar vun, numbar two. Repetition in numbar tre, four." In lay language, this meant that the orchestra was to omit repeats in the first two movements, but to take them in the third and fourth.

Because these musicians had played the Beethoven First with many great conductors, the orchestra gave him a performance of refinement and spirit, incorporating one detail preferred by Mengelberg, another learned from Toscanini, others illuminated by Szell and Walter—but none, it is safe to say, recognizably Burco's. His natural feeling for the music was apparent, as was his instinct for alternating large arm sweeps with smaller ones. Once, in a pause, Burco sneezed and the orchestra chorused "*saluti*," bringing a big grin to his Della Robbia face.

Eventually 11:30 a.m. arrived and the "rehearsal" period (no more than a run-through of the works listed for the next day's concert) was at an end. Stealing another glance at the sheet before him, he recited in a piping, little-boy voice: "*Ai tench iu veri muic—gud bui.*"

Did any of this make Burco a conductor? Does driving a car make one a mechanic? His performance suggested a new kind of musical phenomenon—a back-seat driver, rather than a leader or conductor. Given an orchestra in good order, with

ample artistic gas and technical oil to expend, he could ride along with it comfortably, perhaps even sense when the speed limits were being exceeded and call for a little caution. Should it stall, however, or, what is more to the point, encounter rough going and stop functioning altogether, he would be no more able to get it going again than you or I on the highway.

It is an interesting commentary on the pretensions of such innocents (the culpable ones, of course, are those who exploit them) to observe the qualifications George Szell established when he offered apprenticeships in conducting the Cleveland Orchestra a decade ago. The aspirant should have a thorough knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, composition, and orchestration. He was required to attend an interview in which he would be examined in hearing, rhythm, and musical memory; play a piano piece from the classical repertory; conduct, from memory, the first movement of a standard symphony, not with the orchestra, but by humming it, being prepared to state the instrumentation at any point; play a movement of a symphony at sight from an orchestral score; orchestrate a page of piano music; and transpose at sight from either piano or orchestral score.

Obviously a hard taskmaster, Szell was expecting from his candidates no more than was required of him—if not in such formalized manner—when he began his own career at the Strassburg Municipal Opera at the age of twenty on the recommendation of Richard Strauss. In the dozen years of work and study before he became principal conductor of the German Theater in Prague, Szell doubtless added an intimate understanding of the functioning of every orchestral instrument. A broad knowledge of the symphonic and operatic literature enabled him to keep afloat as director of the Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow when his post in Prague was forfeit to Nazism.

The few basic requirements outlined by Szell might provide an aspiring conductor with the technical means to undertake a career, but there are so many others that I foresee the need for a postgraduate course in a Finishing School (to be established perhaps in Baton Rouge, La.) for purposes of an American career. A sample curriculum might include the following: Elementary Dalcroze Eurythmics with emphasis on rear views, to provide contact with those who experience an orchestral concert with the eye rather than the ear; Advanced Podium Promenade, with illustrations of the Koussevitzky saunter, the Beecham stroll, the Rodzinski rush, and other classic ways of reaching the dais; Public Speaking A, with emphasis on technics of addressing a Board of Directors meeting; Etiquette of the Green Room, with indoctrination in the protocol governing the order of reception for patrons of the arts, other conductors, composers, and mere well-wishers; a course in How to Shake Hands with a Concertmaster and Look Sincere. Bowing from the waist will be taught as a matter of course; scraping will come later.

Even with the possession of all these mechanical attributes, the aspirant would be a mere automaton lacking the most important elements of all—magnetism, personality, the indefinable essence that made an eccentric performance by a Koussevitzky, for example, more absorbing than a correct one by someone else. Perhaps Burco at the age when Koussevitzky came to the Boston Symphony in 1924 will have these attributes too. We may, by 1987, have the answer. In the meantime, I shall bear in mind a maxim of the late Arnold Schönberg: "An eagle can sit on a chicken's eggs from now to eternity and it will hatch nothing but chickens." Giving a child a baton no more makes him a conductor than putting a chicken's egg into an eagle's nest produces an eagle.

❖ *VERY LITTLE, DIVIDED BY FOUR*

THOSE to whom chamber music is a form of intellectual diversion like no other—a community hardly limitless, but unswerving in its devotion—find themselves in a world of new names today, acquiring new loyalties, questioning old predilections. Save for such durable ensembles as the Budapest and Roth quartets, the generation reared on the Flonzaley, London, and Pro Arte quartets has, in more than a figurative way, to start from scratch again to find where its needs are best served.

At first flush this may have the flat sparkle of a bromide, for others toil at Beethoven where once Bülow spun, and there has been no want of Chopin (not always of the preferred kind) since the passing of Godowsky and Gabrilowitsch and Hofmann, Pachmann, Paderewski, and their illustrious contemporaries. But the analogy is not quite a parallel. There are, for the virtuosos, the lures of fame and fortune. Few chamber music players ever become famous as individuals, and if any has made a fortune, its concealment from public knowledge is an even greater achievement.

The fact is that the playing of chamber music—quartets especially—is as nearly selfless a public service as a musician can render. Its perfected execution is the product of more years than it takes merely to master the violin, viola, or cello. Such mastery, of course, is but the starting point. Additional months and years must be spent in mastering a unique repertory, always in the company of the same three associates. If continuity is interrupted, so is progress. Four men must stay

reasonably healthy, live (or at least work) in close proximity for a minimum of two years, with hours of daily rehearsal, develop tolerance for each other's personal traits and shortcomings, and, above all, share a compatible view of a literature about which even experts have violent differences.

They must, if possible, pool their several stores of knowledge for the common good. A cellist who loves to bear down on the C string may discover that he can indulge himself only in private; he must modulate the wide vibrato he cherishes, the better to blend with his leader, second violin, and viola. The elected head of the team may not always be the best musician: as a fledgling viola-player I naturally regard all other violists as studious chaps who don't have the finger-facility of the *Notenfressers* who make agile first violinists, but are better read, have heard more music, and are, altogether, men of superior taste.

If the viola-player of a professional quartet shares my opinion, it is one that he must keep to himself save on those occasions when the success or failure of an interpretation makes his wise counsel mandatory. Then, of course, he must also call upon the tact and discretion that are naturally his, making it appear that any suggestion he offers is an endorsement of a point of view previously advanced by the leader (forgotten in the heat of effort). We never forget, we viola-players, that the viola was Mozart's preferred instrument because, as he said, he could "sit in the middle" and hear what was going on all around him.

Assuming that the work has been faithfully done, the campaign well planned, a manager enticed, the critics impressed, and a public attracted, the group is ready for what is called "an international career" (meaning that if there is no business in Europe, it is welcome in the United States, or vice versa).

Thanks to the airplane, this is somewhat more easily accomplished than in the past, and it can even be hoped that no more time will be spent traveling than playing. Already the quartet begins to feel the pinch of its situation. As far as professional activity is involved, a pianist is most blessed, because he can travel lightest, which is to say alone. A singer or violinist must provide for an accompanist, who can, however, do all those tiresome little things that take up one's own time, but a quartet, being indivisible, must move as a unit. Allowing for the highest possible public favor, what will the books show at the end of the year? Less than the average per concert fee for a soloist of comparable repute, and that divided by four!

But the addition to such old names as Budapest and Roth and Hungarian—there always is a Hungarian Quartet, and doubtless always will be one—of such new names as Amadeus and Griller, Parrenin and Pascal, Paganini and Koeckert, Vegh and Loewenguth, Barylli and Boskovsky (also the fine one named for Leoš Janáček) shows that the fascinations outweigh the inconveniences. A new hierarchy of the bow and strings is in the making from acolytes who have patiently, painfully molded for themselves a personality in the image of Beethoven and Brahms, Schubert and Debussy—also Joachim and Kneisel, Jenő Léner and Louis Bailly. Ranged beside those from abroad are the recent Juilliard and the continuing Curtis, the Walden Quartet (University of Illinois), the Pro Arte of Wisconsin, the Stuyvesant Quartet of New York, the Fine Arts of Chicago, and the one based in Hollywood.

Some of these names, of themselves, mark the transition from older times to these. We no longer have bankers with a whim of gold to underwrite a quartet as the late Edward de

Coppet underwrote the Flonzaleys, but we have such institutions as the Juilliard and Curtis to look after the values to which he was attached. Whether they enjoy the freedom from other responsibilities which Coppet provided for Adolfo Betti, Alfred Pochon, Ugo Ara, and Iwan d'Archambeau may be doubted. For, we are told in an authoritative source: "The quartet was organized in 1902 at first for private performance in his own house, with the stipulation that the members should devote themselves entirely to rehearsing and playing quartets together."

Whether, in the ultimate sense, this is the best way to cultivate this particular garden would possibly depend on the soil and the seeds. In the Flonzaley's later years, including its farewell concert of 1927—in which Nicholas Moldavan sat in the viola chair (previously occupied by Louis Bailly, Felicien d'Archambeau and Ara)—Betti, Pochon, and d'Archambeau seemed to have become a committee of experts matching exquisite swatches of tonal texture rather than performers of music. For young ears, the rise of the London String Quartet (with the incomparable James Levey as leader, and the enduring partnership of Thomas Petre, H. Waldo Warner and C. Warwick Evans participating) dimmed the Flonzaley star even as it was waning. A more vibrant enthusiasm, a stronger sense of tonal colors, a refinement that was not *raffiné*, gave them pre-eminence as long as this personnel endured. This, in truth, was not long, and though Levey's successor was John Pennington of the honeyed tone, and William Primrose first showed his prowess as a violist in Waldo Warner's place, it was not the same thing. The division of favor that followed among the Roth, the Pro Arte, the Léner, the Busch, the Gordon, the Musical Art, the Stradivarius, the Manhattan, and the Kolisch quartets endured until the Bu-

dapest players (in their final non-Hungarian form) stormed our resistance and compelled complete allegiance.

If the Flonzaley pattern of subsidy defines one tradition, the London emergence conforms to another classic procedure. All four players were members of Beecham's 1910 orchestra, whose concertmaster, Albert Sammons, was the first leader of the quartet (Levey succeeded in 1917). They worked privately for a full two years before venturing a concert in 1910, meanwhile playing in the orchestra. This was in the honorable tradition of the Kneisel Quartet, path-breakers for the quartet literature in America, all of whom originally played in the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the time when Franz Kneisel was its concertmaster. One of the fine French quartets of today, the Parrenin, came into being while its players were members of the orchestra of the Luxembourg Radio. They could not find time to work at quartet-playing and earn a living in Paris simultaneously, so they bartered voluntary "exile" for the opportunity to do the necessary labor. On the other hand, four members of the present English Philharmonia Orchestra who were offered a chance to work at quartet-playing with a view to a long-term recording contract had to turn the opportunity down because each lived at an extremity of Metropolitan London and they could not devise a working schedule leaving time for anything else.

That a dozen new good quartets adorn the scene testifies that four dozen musicians in Paris and Prague, Brussels, Ann Arbor, and Parma have succumbed to the old enticements, measured themselves against standards as different as those of Beethoven and Bartók, Brahms and Berg. Whether they lunch at the corner café or "feed" at a university commons,

what sustains them is neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red herring, but love for what they are doing.

They must survive both abuse and temptation if they are to reach and stay at the top of their profession. The abuse may come in the form of citation of the classic story involving a composer beset by inspiration and a performer beset by the complications produced by the inspiration. It concerns Beethoven and Ignaz Schuppanzigh, whose quartet performed virtually all of such Beethoven works for the first time. When Schuppanzigh complained that some of the passages in a quartet were unplayable, Beethoven replied: "*Was glaubt er, dass ich an seine elende Geige denke, wenn der Geist mich packt?*" ("Does he really suppose I think of his wretched fiddle when the spirit gets hold of me?")

The temptations may come in the form of those to which Paganini succumbed when he "played octaves and double stops where single notes were indicated and introduced supplementary trills and grace notes of his own" into a Beethoven quartet, according to a contemporary's observation. (Certainly the fastidious Henri Temianka of today's Paganini Quartet would not consider himself obligated to such procedure). Or it may come in the temptation to overcomplicate the already complicated by committing the scores to memory and performing them in public without notes. A form of masochism introduced to an American audience by the Kolisch ensemble, emulated by the Manhattan Quartet, and recently revived—at a high level of excellence—by the *Quartetto Italiano*, it has manifest artistic as well as practical disadvantages. To carry in the mind what is easily accessible on paper must restrict the performable repertory at

any one time, creating tensions or possibilities of tensions which negate any theoretical spontaneity or gain in freedom. It also puts an enormous premium on the health of the individual members, as the Quartetto Italiano discovered when it had to cancel a complete American tour because one of its members fell ill. Under ordinary circumstances a substitution could have been made, but who could be found with such a repertory memorized? Nor would it have made commercial sense for a group to use music "just this one tour" at the expense of its advertised preference.

However, if a musician thinks of musicians as a fraternity and of himself as one of the brotherhood, there is no fuller way in which he can realize his conviction than as a member of a string quartet. There was a time when life was leisurely enough to permit Dr. Theodor Billroth of Vienna, a celebrated surgeon, to be an intimate friend of Brahms and a member of a quartet that played together regularly. Or for Nicholas Longworth, Speaker of the House of Representatives to share musical evenings with Efrem Zimbalist. Amateurs still play chamber music here and there, if not with the regularity they would like or the prevalence I would like. Altogether, however, they would agree with the late Jacques Thibaud when he wrote, some years ago:

There is nothing so enjoyable for the true artist as ensemble playing with his peers. Solo playing seems quite unimportant beside it. I recall as the most perfect and beautiful of all my musical memories, a string quartet and quintet (with piano) session in Paris in my own home, where we played three of the loveliest chamber music works ever written, in the following combinations: Beethoven's Seventh Quartet, Opus 59, No. 1 (the first "Rasumov-

sky”), Ysaÿe, myself, Kreisler, viola—he plays it remarkably well—and Casals, cello; and the Mozart G major, myself, Kreisler violin II, Ysaÿe, and Casals. Then we telephoned to Pugno, who came over, and after an excellent dinner, we played the César Franck Piano Quintet. It was the most enjoyable musical day of my life. A concert-manager offered us a fortune to play in this combination—just two concerts in every capital in Europe.

Such sound as is suggested by a combination of Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Thibaud, and Casals may as well be left to the imagination. Nor are there many concert-managers prepared to offer “a fortune” for a chamber music group these days, however illustrious. In any case, for the best players of today—even as for these—satisfaction comes not from the profits, which are limited, but from the rewards, which are enormous.

♦ OVATION AND TRIUMPH

WHETHER functioning on the police-court level or on one equivalent to that of the United States Court of Appeals, the critic performs a judicial function every time he records a judgment (a judicial word in itself) on a composition, a performer, or a group of performers. As professions go, however, his is a reasonably youthful one, with barely one hundred years of practice since Schumann and Berlioz set their memorable examples. In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that his language is largely a borrowed one, borrowed sometimes from the wrong sources.

When the news columns of a paper report that a court has found a defendant guilty or not guilty, released him with a suspended sentence, or imposed a fine provided by law for the offense "as charged," there is no doubt in the reader's mind what has happened. Arguments have been advanced, the credibility of witnesses has been evaluated, a jury has deliberated on the evidence presented, a complete historic process has been accomplished. Turning to the column devoted to musical affairs in the same paper, the reader is often inclined to wonder whether he and the critic were present at the same affair the night before. Especially if he—as a member of a kind of jury, the audience—and the critic have differing opinions about the degree of culpability of the offender.

Some of this, of course, is inherent in the nature of critical writing, even more in the nature of the individuals doing the critical writing. Police reporters are more likely

than critics to have a uniform degree of background and aptitude for their work, for the simple reason that city editors are better qualified to judge the quality of their performance than they are that of the critic's. After a reasonable amount of experience, I have concluded that the usual reasons advanced by the public for these differences of opinion—dishonesty, partiality, indigestion, domestic strife—are mostly false. The root cause in almost every instance is critical ignorance, lack of suitable standards, or an unwillingness to make the kind of effort required to apply them. Much more critical work is colored by laziness than by dishonesty, for a straightforward, well-organized, clearly expressed critical statement is the product of no less conscious effort than any other accomplishment to which the words apply.

The reader is often least accurately informed about what should be the most apparent fact: the nature of the audience response to what it has heard. Needless to say, I do not consider applause or the lack of it an infallible guide to the value of what has been performed. Too many factors are involved for the presence or relative absence of applause (in the Anglo-Saxon countries there is always some) to carry a positive or negative finality. But the reader is entitled to know the amount and character of it just as he is entitled to a report of the damage caused by a two-alarm fire.

I have, on numerous occasions, been present when a performer has performed well and the audience has responded in kind. More than occasionally I have read in the next day's paper: "Mr. Serkin scored a triumph with his performance of the Schumann Concerto." In such circumstances, I sometimes think to myself, where was the "four-horse circular chariot of a peculiar form" to which the hero in question

was entitled? In any proper source, a "triumph" is defined as "an imposing ceremonial in honor of a general [Roman] who had gained a decisive victory over a foreign enemy." To a degree, the last phrase suggests the relationship between a virtuoso and his "enemy," the composer, but it leaves us short of accuracy where a musical experience is concerned.

There is one musical situation to which the further details of a "triumph" apply: "An imposing ceremonial in honor of a general. . . . He was allowed to enter the city crowned with laurel, bearing a scepter in one hand, and a branch of laurel in the other, wearing a toga picta. . . . He was preceded by the senate and magistrates, musicians, the spoils, the captives in fetters, etc., and followed by his army in marching order." This is an excellent description of the entrance of Radames in the second act of *Aïda*, but the tenor has relatively little to sing in this scene, and hardly participates in his own triumph.

Even more favored than triumph is "ovation": not infrequently applied in a trinity of "conquest," "triumph," and "ovation." This, however, is like rating manslaughter in terms of third, first, and second degrees. An ovation, by Roman standards, was a secondary triumphal honor, attending the entry of "a general who had won a victory of less importance than that for which a triumph was granted." It is, admittedly, a hairline decision to determine whether a performer has had a "triumph" or been accorded an "ovation." This, I think, is one more good reason for banishing both words from what passes as the language of musical criticism.

Some areas of the Roman situation were admirably covered by Hector Berlioz in his celebrated essay "*De viris illustribus*

urbis Romæ," referred to on page 138. In our day, not only the participants, but also the observers confess a heavy debt to the organization and culture of ancient Rome. "His friends, who are legion," we are often informed "were present to wish him well." If there are performers with "friends who are legion" they could easily fill Carnegie Hall (with an overflow meeting in Town Hall), for a legion was made up of never less than 4,500, and sometimes as many as 6,000, men. For that matter, a popular soprano who never ventures a new role without "her cohorts being present in goodly numbers" is well-supported also, the word "cohort" defining a tenth of a Roman legion, or from 450 to 600 men.

As for "conquest," it is a compliment to be risked only under circumstances in which the writer knows exactly what he wants to say. If it is true the outcome has been achieved "by force or fighting," the performer has succeeded in "crushing the resistance" of the audience, or secured his results "by a struggle in which obstruction or opposition is overcome," then it is proper to say that the performer achieved "a conquest." In more usual circumstances, the implication might be of an ill-disposition that did not exist. The "hostile audience" is, of itself, almost a contradiction in terms.

For my part, I believe that it is the function of the observer to define the kind of audience in attendance as well as its mass reaction, for the former can be a clue to, and often have a determining effect on, the latter. It is a fallacy to assume an audience per se to be a composite without character, for audiences vary as much as programs—often, indeed, because of programs. Yet they are rarely categorized as they should be, except in the instance of what is called a

"friendly audience," in which the amenities of friendship—either at a debut or a farewell performance—ignore the realities of what has occurred.

Also readily recognizable is the "loyal" audience, the one that assembles in a clannish spirit because of its personal associations with a "beloved" artist—who may be "beloved" for any reason from the way she wore her hair in the twenties to the way he wears his years in the sixties. In almost all instances, the musical merits exist only in the past tense, though the performer has not recognized that the time for farewell has arrived. I shall not risk lawsuits by reference to current "loyal" audiences, but where you find a performer who "could do no wrong"—my recollections include Elisabeth Schumann and Frieda Hempel—then, in truth, you have a "loyal" audience.

A common phenomenon in American concert halls is the ritualistic audience, the one that assembles for no other reason than that a given time on a given day of an alternate week has arrived. Its appointment with Fritz Reiner, Eugene Ormandy, or Charles Munch is as much a part of the day's routine as an appointment with the dentist. No more than saying "I am going to see Dr. Clayton" when what they mean is "I am going to the dentist" would the members of such an audience say "I am going to hear Mozart" when what they mean is "I am going to the Philharmonic." Their appearance at a concert is rarely determined by the music to be played, but their nonappearance frequently is.

The "distinguished" or "gala" audience, oddly enough, is one or the other of these things not because of who it is, but what it has on. A suitable number of black ties or expensive evening gowns can give any gathering a "gala" aspect, though it may be hating every minute of it. It is

the audience for the opening of the opera or the ballet, late to arrive, early to leave, noisy, ill-mannered, and very clean. It is the despair of ushers and the most dearly cherished desire of every press agent.

Whether or not there is today an avant-garde audience is debatable. Such a pathbreaker as Stravinsky created one almost by reason of his own existence, but admiration for accomplishments—as a witty homosexual said of his predilection—is now “something that no longer takes any courage.” We are in a time between causes (hopefully waiting, I suppose, for results), with a good deal of the expectancy and clamor that attended the affairs of the League of Composers, the Philadelphia Orchestra in Stokowski’s blond period, or the Copland-Sessions sessions now hushed. The programs themselves are museum pieces housed in the basement of the Museum of Modern Art or the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium in the Metropolitan Museum. When such trends are thus institutionalized, the regularity of it all is readily apparent.

The “reverent” audience or the “professional” audience is self-defining. Its members are, in truth, attracted by what is taking place, though not necessarily for purposes of pleasure. A Metropolitan Ring cycle, a performance of Bach’s B minor Mass, or a Ralph Kirkpatrick evening of Scarlatti at the harpsichord will find as reverent a gathering, almost, as any that assembles in a church, and present for the same reason—the good of its soul. They would as soon listen critically to a sermon as reckon whether the B minor Mass was vitalized or merely played.

The “professional” audience carries the music with it, either in the head or in the hand. It is concerned not so much with reacting to the performance as with using it:

with making markings in a score for future reference, perhaps to downgrade a future performer in terms of the present one. Its most vigorous reaction is reserved for the intermission, which it thoroughly enjoys whether or not the performance has satisfied it. It is an audience keenly attentive to technical detail, and should a wrong note recur, a double stop be false in intonation, or a prestissimo be played only presto, the doom of the performer is sealed, the day is lost, and he might as well retire before the rout is complete. Such an audience is rarely complete without a man of advanced years, usually a piano teacher, who, because he is stocky, still has his hair, and possesses prominent facial bones, cultivates a resemblance to Beethoven.

There is another group that comes to the concert hall with an image in its mind of the music to be performed. Rather than the contour of the notes themselves, their picture is one of the emotional pattern of the work. They are concerned with its nobility or humor, its sweep or reticence, its majesty or pathos. There is some element of this audience ("musical") in every group, for the public place is, after all, public. But these people are likely to find themselves in wholly congenial company no more than eight or ten times a winter in New York. Only so often does a typical season offer an event of such attraction that the true music-lover, of whatever economic station, feels it an occasion not to be missed.

A lieder recital by Fischer-Dieskau or Hans Hotter, a Bach program by Wanda Landowska, the Hungarian String Quartet playing Bartók, Gerald Moore talking about the subtleties of his craft, the chance to renew acquaintance with such an old favorite as Backhaus or to make the acquaintance of such a gifted new one as Glenn Gould—these

happenings seem to act as a screen through which only persons with well-defined interests pass. By standing in the lobby for ten minutes before the concert begins, you can tell what sort of company is assembling. The tests are indefinable, the touchstones vague—no more, perhaps, than that the members of the audience require minimum assistance in finding their seats—but as the time approaches for the affair to begin, you sense the audience to be worthy of the performer, and both together of the music.

If the professional observer, through the indoctrination that has made him a professional, is able to isolate and define for his readers the kind of audience with which he has been listening, he can also tell them much about the worth of the applause to which he has been exposed. It can be done subtly or directly, inferentially or explicitly, but it is much a part of the case history as the symptoms a patient submits to a doctor.

One of the inspired statements about public life made in recent years was the late Artur Schnabel's: "Applause is a receipt, not a bill." Schnabel was explaining why he did not render applause the tribute of encores. In his view, his program gave "value received" for the admission price paid. It probably never occurred to him to follow the example of Vladimir de Pachmann, whose audience in London could not be quieted after he played a long, taxing program. He sat down and played the C minor Sonata, opus 111, of Beethoven, to punish them.

♦ MY VERSION OF "THE DAY"

April 3-4, 1954

ALL sorts of musicians have come and gone among us in the past three or four decades—Mengelberg, Koussevitzky, Rachmaninoff, Furtwängler—without leaving any doubt of what, exactly, happened when they left public life. If some indecision and confusion exists, still, about the last public appearance of the late Arturo Toscanini, that event nevertheless fulfilled, in an odd way, the Shakespearean observation that "nothing in his life became him like the leaving it." That is to say, if one considers that so exceptional an artist must, of necessity, have an equally exceptional separation from his public, the world public for whom he had been a figure of prominence for well over half a century.

The day began, actually, long before it started. There had been speculation, through the winter before, and the winter before that, as to whether a season-ending Verdi *Requiem* or Beethoven Ninth Symphony or *Missa solemnis* might not be "all." But Toscanini returned after each summer with his old appetite for work, even if the progress to the podium slowed from year to year, the troublesome knee inducing the precaution of a handrail around the podium. When so inclined, he could steady himself by supporting his weight against it. He was rarely so inclined.

The circulation, on March 29, 1954, of an announcement that the broadcast time for the program of April 4 had been extended to an hour and a quarter prompted those who

thought they knew to making preparations. The program (all-Wagner) included the Prelude to *Lohengrin*, the "Forest Murmurs" from *Siegfried*, "Dawn" and "Siegfried's Rhine Journey" from *Götterdämmerung*, the Prelude and "Liebestod" from *Tristan*, and the *Meistersinger* Prelude. A formidable sequence for any conductor, it seemed typical largess from Toscanini, just into his eighty-eighth year.

The "day" began for me shortly before one o'clock on Saturday, April 3. The schedule called for a dress rehearsal of the program in Carnegie Hall, and those in the musical world who felt some sort of finality impending were not going to be elsewhere if they could help it. They had more company than they anticipated. The Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, which was sponsoring the series, had far more applicants for tickets to the broadcast than it could satisfy. They had, therefore, issued tickets by the hundreds for the rehearsal.

The first floor of Carnegie Hall was nearly full of people when Toscanini appeared. In these later years, the legendary restriction against interlopers at his rehearsals had been relaxed, and it was not uncommon to see family and friends, friends of friends, even music critics, scattered through the dark. In no circumstances, however, were they more than a handful, and they accepted their presence as a privilege.


It was soon apparent that Toscanini, mindful of the surroundings, was giving a concert rather than rehearsing. The *Lohengrin* Prelude was played through without a stop—beautifully enough by all standards except his own. The program noted above had, a day or two before, been altered to delete the *Tristan* selections, the Overture and Bacchanale from *Tannhäuser* (the Paris version of 1861) having been substituted. Thus the *Lohengrin* Prelude was followed at

the rehearsal by the "Waldweben," then the "Dawn" and "Rhine Journey." The Wagnerian sunrise came up in full glory, but storm clouds began to gather with the "Rhine Journey." By tradition, the fine solo horn-player Arthur Berv was stationed in the wings to give the proper illusion as Siegfried's call receded into the distance. During the passage in which his call was to be sounded something palpably went wrong. Thus far Toscanini had tried to combine a decent toleration of the unwanted audience with the requirements of the job in hand: when it came to a crisis, the job won out. The air was warm with "Vergogna" ("Shame"), "Ignorante," and the other time-tried expletives to key himself as well as the men up to the concentration he felt was lacking.

Then came the backbreaking straw. He indicated, by reference to a number in the score, the point where he wanted the performance resumed. There was confusion: he had given it wrong or had been misunderstood. Frank Miller, the leader of the cello section, who often acted as liaison in such matters, tried to give the indication correctly. In the midst of the delay and confusion, Toscanini left the podium and walked to the wings. As the audience buzzed, an announcement was heard on the public address system: "This concludes the public portion of the rehearsal." It never resumed.

Early the next afternoon I was back at the hall for a Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra concert. As I stopped to greet house manager John Totten (a friend for years), he told me that there was some doubt as to whether Toscanini would conduct the broadcast. His daughter-in-law was critically ill (she died not many weeks later), and Erich Leinsdorf had been asked to stand by in case of need.

The broadcast was scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m., and I arrived a quarter of an hour early. As I entered the hall, I was greeted by Leonard Meyers of the NBC Press Department. He had a handful of thickly stuffed envelopes. At his feet was a box with many more. He handed me one with a significant smile, and I walked on to my seat. I hardly needed to open it to know what it contained. My wife had reached her seat before I sat down, and as I tore open the envelope, I said: "This is it. Toscanini's quitting." The confirmation was contained in a pair of letters. In the best diplomatic

tradition, the one with the emblem  began:

My very dear David:

At this season of the year seventeen years ago you sent me an invitation to become the Musical Director of an orchestra to be created especially for me for the purpose of broadcasting symphonic music throughout the United States.

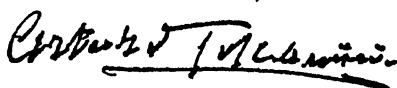
You will remember how reluctant I was to accept your invitation because I felt at that time that I was too old to start a new venture. However, you persuaded me and all of my doubts were dispelled as soon as I began rehearsing for the first broadcast of Christmas night in 1937 with the group of fine musicians whom you had chosen.

Year after year it has been a joy for me to know that the music played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra has been acclaimed by the vast radio audiences all over the United States and abroad.

And now the sad time has come when I must reluctantly lay aside my baton and say goodbye to my orchestra, and in leaving I want you to know that I shall carry with me rich memories of these years of music making and heartfelt gratitude to you and the National Broadcasting Company for having made them possible.

I know that I can rely on you to express to everyone at the National Broadcasting Company who has worked with me all these years my cordial and sincere thanks.

Your friend,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Arturo Toscanini". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

It was addressed, of course, to Brigadier General David Sarnoff, as Chairman of the Board of the Radio Corporation of America. I did not realize until afterwards that it was dated March 25, 1954 (Toscanini's eighty-seventh birthday), or that the facsimile process that reproduced his signature showed every tremor of the hand. No king ever abdicated less willingly or under more duress than Arturo Toscanini. The answer, from Sarnoff, was dated March 29, and side-stepped the issue by saying: "you have fully earned the right to lay down your baton." It went on, at considerable length, to glorify the contributions of NBC to the world of music.

This, then, was the atmosphere in which the program was performed: an inconclusive rehearsal, a gravely disturbed family situation, and the galling knowledge that he, Toscanini, had capitulated to forces he could no longer fight: age and institutional pressure. After sixty-seven years, his artistic life was being publicly interred. For better or worse, the audience was unaware of these circumstances. Only the press (and the orchestra) had the information. The general inclination to make the occasion "gala" was not shared by those directly concerned. Toscanini, certainly, was aggrieved, and the orchestra men feared, on the basis of long-standing rumors, that his retirement would mean the end of their employment. If they had read the "My very dear David" letter and interpreted correctly the carefully phrased "an

orchestra to be created especially for me," they knew that their fears were confirmed.

I have dealt with this matter in detail for one primary and one secondary reason. Both concern inaccurate descriptions of the events to this point, and of the playing of the program itself. They illustrate with striking clarity how misinformation can be circulated, a false statement of clearly demonstrable facts put into print. I refer not to newspaper or magazine articles, which might be considered ephemeral, but to books that occupy places on library shelves and take on the nature of documents.

My first reason is Samuel Chotzinoff's description, in his *Toscanini: An Intimate Portrait*, of the playing of the *Tannhäuser* Overture and *Bacchanale*. It reads:

At the point where the offstage strings faintly echo the turbulence of the orgiastic night and retreat ghostlike before the thin, uneasy dawn, Toscanini's stick wavered and began to describe unintelligible motions. The orchestra, suddenly frightened, followed for a few bars, through habit, their Maestro's curious, unrelated gestures. Then, instinctively assuming direction, the men tried desperately to coalesce and reach the end in unity, though without the finesse of leadership. The attempt, beset by self-consciousness and fear, was a failure. In the soft cacophony that ensued, the Maestro ceased conducting and put his hand to his eyes. The men stopped playing and the house was engulfed in terrible silence.

Perhaps only thirty seconds passed, but it was like a year. Then the Maestro, like a *Tannhäuser* banishing with a gesture the miasma of the Venusberg, straightened up, lifted his baton for a powerful downbeat, and swung the men into the *Meistersinger* Prelude.

The only flaw in this affecting description (as I wrote in a review of the book when it appeared) is that it simply

isn't true. It is, actually, a traumatic experience that Chotzinoff believes to have happened, but which did not. He was, by his own description, in the control booth attending to his duties as supervisor of music for the radio network. I, of course, was in the hall. As I then reported: "The hardest task of all seemed the *Tannhäuser* Overture and *Bacchanale*. . . . Now and then he reached the left hand to the rail for support, but as the seventeen or so minutes of the work went on [actually closer to twenty-three], the cues became fewer and even an extra beat crept in, it seemed, at one point."

My preparations (to which I alluded earlier) included arrangements for an off-the-air recording of the broadcast, the event obviously being historic. By reference to it, I have confirmed beyond question the sequence of events. Toscanini, clearly, was fatigued by the successive climaxes of the *Bacchanale*, whose frenzies have an almost frightening fury. Whether he blacked out momentarily when they subsided, or merely grew arm-weary, no one will ever know. In the quiet passage played by a rear group of strings (the "echo" to which Chotzinoff refers), part of the cello section, an isolated horn, and a harp, the men were temporarily on their own. The scoring being diffused, no group could hear what the other was doing, despite Frank Miller's efforts to coordinate them. After perhaps thirty seconds (about a dozen measures, in the slow tempo of this passage), Toscanini resumed his place and the music went on to its end—five and a half minutes later—with no "terrible silence," but to a clamor of applause.

The "terrible silence" actually was in the control booth, shared by Chotzinoff, the late Guido Cantelli, and announcer Ben Grauer, among others. The worst having been antici-

pated, an arrangement had been made by which, at the touch of a button, the "air" could be switched to a recording. When Toscanini's fatigue seemed to be the prelude to a collapse, Cantelli reached for the button, Ben Grauer announced "a temporary interruption for operational reasons," and the startled radio listeners heard the incongruous pulsations of the First Symphony of Brahms. The music in the hall, meanwhile, went on, and when the panicky personnel realized their error, the "air" was returned to the program, which continued on its way. All this is on the recording, plus the applause, plus Grauer's announcement of the Meistersinger Prelude—without the "miasma" of Chotzinoff's description.

In the English edition of Chotzinoff's book published in 1956, the text remains as quoted, but a footnote has been added:

I observed and heard the Maestro's final broadcast from the control booth of Carnegie Hall. When, towards the end of the Bacchanale, it became clear that he was suffering a loss of memory, the orchestra was cut off the air and a recording substituted. Seeing the Maestro stop beating time and covering his eyes with his hand, I assumed that the orchestra had stopped playing. I have since learned that the orchestra, after forty seconds of discordant playing, managed to finish together, and that many in the audience, among them some music critics, were quite unaware that anything untoward had occurred.

The best summation of this inadequate apologia was contained in Ernest Newman's review of the book for the *London Sunday Times*: "I feel bound to say that the ten lines of 'explanation' he has added to the final page of the English edition seems to me a mere evasion of the real point at issue. . . ."

The secondary source of misinformation was Vincent Sheean's *First and Last Love*, which appeared some time after the Chotzinoff volume. This is a chatty, often entertaining, recital of the author's long-standing interest in music and musical people. Being in New York at the time, Sheean made a point of securing admission to the rehearsal of April 3, in his description of which he refers not once, but twice, to the Maestro's breakdown "in the middle of the *Tannhäuser Bacchanale*." The second time, says Sheean:

Many stories have been told of this day and the next, and since they do not agree very well, it may be simplest to tell my own just as I remember it. . . . The earlier part of the program was played very beautifully, I believe, and with few interruptions. . . . Then came the *Tannhäuser Bacchanale*, and so far as I could tell it was sweeping along on its usual tempestuous course when the Maestro stopped the orchestra and shouted, rather hoarsely, at the brasses. They had, it seemed, made a wrong entry. I thought they looked extremely puzzled. He shouted the number "Thirteen" at them in English and in Italian. Up the baton: they tried again: again he stopped them.

There is more, in elaborate detail of what *did* happen in the rehearsal of the "Dawn" and "Rhine Journey" noted previously.

The tricky nature of Sheean's mistaken reportage is that he recalls having had "no desire" (after observing Toscanini's rage) to go to the concert or to hear the broadcast. But, he adds, the breakdown in the broadcast, "so far as I could tell from the accounts . . . must have been in the same place, an entry of the brasses in the *Bacchanale*, probably at the same number." Sheean then refers to my printed comments on Chotzinoff's statement and concludes: "By

common sense reasoning it seems likely that it [the confusion] occurred just where it had occurred the day before."

In addition to not hearing the concert or the broadcast, Sheean did not hear the rehearsal of the Overture and Bacchanale for the plain reason that there was none. He heard the same inconclusive rehearsal of the *Götterdämmerung* excerpts which I heard and mentally transposed this experience into the framework of the Bacchanale when it became a cause célèbre. The danger point in the "Rhine Journey" was safely passed because it had been clarified; the one in the Bacchanale snarled because it had not been.

"Common sense" or "reasoning" has little to do with the functioning of the musical mind under stress. I have a theory, not previously advanced, of the factors at work in Toscanini's momentary confusion. At the time the Chotzinoff book appeared, I borrowed a full orchestral score of the Overture and Bacchanale from the library of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra to clarify my own views of what had taken place. It was a score in use when Toscanini and the Philharmonic-Symphony made prodigious music together, including a dozen and half performances of the Overture and Bacchanale here and abroad.

I was pursuing the listening-looking process with the disc of the broadcast, eventually arriving at the shoal waters where the grounding occurred. Turning the page over as the full orchestra subsided and the strings (in the opera, off-stage voices) took over, I was struck by the alteration in the appearance of the physical score itself. Someone had drawn in warning parallels—when printed, they are termed "system separators"—to alert the eye to the lower system of staves where the strings play with the harp before the full orchestra resumes on the following pages (see the reproduction).

It is a familiar fact that Toscanini's memory was a visual one, that he could "see" the score in his mind as he rehearsed or performed it (during rehearsals the text was usually available for double-checking a fine point if needed). Is it a possibility that, as he came to this point in the score, under conditions of stress and fatigue, his "internal eye" failed to follow the doubled-up staves, and his focus somehow dropped "off the page," that the hand over the eyes was a gesture to restore concentration, and that contact resumed when the next, more fully scored passage was reached?

I propose this merely as theory, within the realm of the conceivable. I do not suggest that the parallels are in Toscanini's hand—someone acquainted with his methods says he did not use such markings for study purposes. I merely suggest that what, under ordinary circumstances, might be a hazard for an ordinary conductor, might, under extraordinary conditions become a hazard for an extraordinary one. It is, in any case, based on musical possibility rather than on Sheean's "common sense reasoning."

As for the circumstances of the day, the exchange of letters released to the press, the additional pressures put upon Toscanini by the tactics employed, what was the reward NBC reaped? Toscanini's retirement from the orchestra would have been a front-page story whenever it happened. What would have been lost had it all been withheld for a quieter time, when his season's work was done? So far as I can determine, only one thing: the photo spread in *Life* showing the agony of the ending in all its graphic inhumanity, even to the conductor and his somber-faced family leaving Carnegie by a side entrance to avoid the curious at the stage door.

1

1

13

Sur le théâtre.

Chœur invisible des Sirenes

se dissolvent, on aperçoit l'enlèvement d'Europe que les Tritons et les Néréides conduisent vers le lac bleu.

Chœur, ta

far - dia - tel - vres - se

go - de - la mort - far - date - vite - se - Rom - pli - ra

de - fa - mour - far - date - vite - se

13

Two pages from the full score of the *Tannhäuser Overture and Bacchanale*. The circled X that I have placed on page 84 indicates the point at which Toscanini ceased beating and the string group

[illegible]

Les nœuds se font masquer l'apparition: le 6 Grèce représente leurs danses langoureuses.
 Le seul 1^{er} Violon.

Les autres musiciens masquent l'apparition: les Orchestres reprennent leurs danses langoureuses.

Un seul P2 Violon.

dolce.

Un seul Vlle

dolce.

pp

pp

sharp, and C sharp (at the words "*De l'amour l'ardente ivresse*") were played by the cellos. At the point I have indicated by the second X (page 85), order was practically restored, and beginning with page 86 (not shown) the performance was once more firmly in hand.

♦ THE IDES OF MARX

THE RECENT, if not current, atmosphere respecting the public demonstration of what used to be called "radical sympathies" is so distant from what it was in the thirties that one who has a lively recollection of those days could well believe that they occurred in another country. It was a rare Sunday when the music pages of the New York newspapers did not announce activities involving the "Workers Choral Ensemble," "The Composers Collective," "The Red Dancers," or the "Jewish Workers Musical Alliance," each sizzling with its own brand of yeasty youthful ferment. If they corrupted anything but the listeners' musical tastes, I have never heard of it.

The day being so distant and its atmosphere so unlikely to recur, I have transcribed, for such historical purposes as it may serve, a report of such an occasion in March 1934. My curiosity had been stirred previously, my instinct for a new experience aroused, but the impulse for action had been lacking until one such program promised something no conscientious student of musical affairs could ignore: the world *première*, at the Civic Repertory Theater on Fourteenth Street, of *The Strange Funeral in Braddock* (Pennsylvania), with words by Michael Gold, music by Elie Siegmeister.

A hurrying spring rain only enforced my belief that something of moment would reward my perserverance; I was remembering the occasions on which the cosy atmosphere of an auditorium surrounded by rainfall had induced an intimacy often otherwise lacking. A placard outside the theater

informed me that I was about to participate in "The International Music Week against Fascism and War," under the auspices of the Workers Music League, United States Section, International Music Buro. This sounded all very Muscovitish and authentic. I had my first misgivings when I stepped to the box office and discovered that tickets were available at two prices.

Is it, I asked myself, truly communistic, to recognize such unfortunate distinctions? But, I further reflected, no doubt the better seats are set aside for those who can, under the present system, afford only a quarter. This would compensate them for their lowly situation, while their more affluent brethren with fifty cents to spend enjoyed their generosity in the gallery.

This, I soon discovered, was no more than a mirage. I presented my fifty-cent ticket, and was promptly and deferentially ushered into the parquet, with the advice that I could take any vacant seat. Here I discerned a somewhat confused interpretation of Marxism. Equality apparently existed within each price level (no reserved seats), but no mingling of the comrades was tolerated. This, I said to myself, is a practical lesson in distribution.

As I was somewhat early (the concert was announced for 8:30, and it was only 8:35), my perusal of the incoming audience was interrupted by the cries of half a dozen hawkers. It was all very reminiscent of Minsky's, but instead of *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang* or *Hot Dog*, they were selling *Soviet Russia Today* and the *Worker Musician*; instead of by song sheets containing "all the latest Broadway hits for a nickel," one was tempted with the *Red Song Book*. I withstood these successfully, but felt obliged to pay for a small red silk bow that had somehow become attached to my lapel while I was

looking at the comrade, who was young and very pretty. It was my good fortune that she was selling something costing a dime, not a quarter.

Not unlike audiences elsewhere, this one grew impatient and began to applaud insistently, if good-naturedly, at 8:50. At 9:00 it began again, more insistently, less good-naturedly. At 9:05 the curtains parted, and a young man who had studied elocution presented himself as the chairman. He began "Comrades and fellow workers . . ." and proceeded to a long exposition of the evening's purpose. The totality would be needlessly taxing: among his statements was: "all musicians, all intellectuals, must mobilize in a united front against Fascism and Imperialism." The significance of these words was clearly apparent to the audience, which applauded each time he paused for breath.

That some musicians might not care to be mobilized against any one thing or another, or might conscientiously object to such a mobilization as one objects to any compulsory action, or would prefer to exercise the privileges of free action and free speech for which the Communists contend so loudly, seemed to concern him not at all. This was a speech, and a speech is not meant to be analyzed. We (the audience) were assured that "the major struggle is political and economic. But the success of the movement depends on a working class solidarity against reaction . . . an ideological background to provide the class-conscious musician with a relationship to his fellow worker . . . music must be used as one of the weapons in the class struggle. . . ." The clichés tumbled glibly from his tongue. At 9:25 he was finished, pausing at last for his real function: to introduce Lihan Adohmyan, conductor of the Daily Worker Chorus.

The curtain rolled up slowly, and Adohmyan darted in

from the wings and leaped to the podium. As he reached the box, the pianist sounded a chord and the audience rose to its feet. Not knowing quite what to expect, I rose too, assuming, that in common with all revolutionary meetings, it would begin with the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Not so. With Adohmyan facing them to beat time, the audience joined in the "*Internationale*." As he exhorted them to greater effort, the chorus behind him—without a sign from the conductor—clenched their right fists and raised them shoulder high. Doubtless this signified militancy, but I, as a prospective convert, could only guess.

The concert began with a group of proletarian songs by the chorus: the "Song of Solidarity" from the anti-Hitler film *Kuhle Wampe*. Then followed a Negro labor song, "I'se Bound for Joe Brown's Coal Mine," and a "humorous" song from one of the Soviets. Even a first performance was included, titled "Onward to Battle," by L. E. Swift. This proved to be pleasantly proletarian in sentiment, but made use of a despised bourgeois form—a canon. Whatever my doubts, the audience greeted it vociferously, and Swift rose for a bow. I was, but should not have been, surprised to recognize Swift as a composer well known in unproletarian circles under a less abstract name. Followed then Wolpe's "A Just New World Is in Creation" and a Siberian marching song, all sung with compelling vigor. Something about all this, with the exception of the Negro work song, was perplexingly familiar: where had I heard it all before, the tune slightly different, the words altogether so?

It was, of course, Rudolf Friml—not the composer of "Indian Love Call," "Rose Marie," "Giannina Mia," etc., but of the "Song of the Vagabonds" ("And to Hell with

Burgundy")—which echoed in them. The same use of augmented chords for a journalistic kind of excitement, the same crisp, jerky emphasis, the same outer foaming and inner emptiness, like the synthetic brew of Prohibition days. All were copiously present. Musical comedy and revolution—could the irony be more sublime?

The concert continued. The chairman appeared to introduce the next performer who, it appeared, would play a sonata by Comrade Shostakovich, already celebrated in these circles if no others. Again it was my pleasure to recognize a musician familiar to me from other surroundings, also by another name. The chairman further identified him as a member of the "Juilliard Chapter" of the National Students League, an organization affiliated with the Workers Music League. That a chapter of the NSL would get far in such a stronghold of conservatism as the pre-Schuman Juilliard seemed dubious at best: but the pianist was clearly devoted to Shostakovich's score, piling it up in two neat furrows on either side of the piano bench.

The work proved to be just the regular modern piano sonata one heard half a dozen times a winter at the League of Composers, the New School, or even Town Hall. Certainly there was no internal suggestion to identify it as more specifically proletarian than a work of Bartók, Hindemith, the English Walton, or the Italian Casella, each of a different political orientation. After eighteen minutes it ended to an ear-splitting burst of applause during which the chairman reappeared. He broke into the clapping to inquire: "Do you want to hear it again?" As if by magic, the applause subsided. One or two voices cried "Yes," but the majority silence could not be denied. Sensing that the answer was negative, he

asked: "Or do you want to hear something else?" This carried, and the pianist came back to perform a composition of his own, from a work written for The Red Dancers.

Another speech followed, this time by Adohmyan, much in the vein of the earlier exhortation, following which a pause of ten minutes was decreed. This provided a space for reflection, along such lines as: was there as much revolutionary sentiment in Wolpe's "A Just New World Is in Creation" as in the first movement of Beethoven's "*Eroica*"? Was Handel less an individual because he was patronized by George I? Did Wagner cease to be a revolutionary because Ludwig of Bavaria became his patron? Could not his *Huldigungsmarsch*, written for Ludwig, be construed as a tribute to the Third International by one unacquainted with its title? Could not music express any emotion the listener attributed to it?

All these thoughts passed through my mind as I looked about the theater at the audience, the bulk of it under thirty, the rest suspiciously dominated by poets and composers who might have a better chance for a hearing in these surroundings than elsewhere. That all these people—including Swift, the fortunate possessor of an income proceeding from the earnings of his deceased father, a bourgeois physician—were merely playing at revolution was unquestionable. The atmosphere was strangely similar to that of a football rally in a small college, where almost certain defeat on the morrow was, for the while, being obscured by outwardly induced enthusiasm—with the Movement taking the place of Alma Mater.

When the "concert" resumed, it was not with more music, but with another speech. The voluble chairman told his audience that the next speaker was a man of very old American

stock who had occupied a respectable, nay a distinguished, place in the bourgeois academic world. He had given up much to join the movement. But he had "come over." He was now a member of "the united music front." The irritating evangelism of this revival-meeting treatment obviously did not appeal to the man in question. But he mastered his irritation, and launched into his subject, which, for a change, was proletarian music. The idea of music as a universal language is fallacious, he said. "There is some music which is not fit for any ears, let alone proletarian ears," he remarked pithily. Among the acceptable music of the past (which would somehow have to suffice until a new proletarian music was created) was Bach and Mozart's.

At this point I reached for my hat. Bach, whose typical output included such sentiments as "*Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*," a fit companion for the proletarian revolution? Mozart, the Freemason and composer of innumerable Masses the man to inspire those who believe that religion is the opiate of the masses? The confusion was more than I could tolerate, and I reluctantly took my departure, the last word I heard being "solidarity."

And what about *The Strange Funeral in Braddock*? That, it seemed, had silently been omitted. The place allotted to it, I discovered when I was back on Fourteenth Street and had consulted my program, had been occupied by the intermission.

♦ ESSAY ON SCHMALZ

YOU won't find it mentioned in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (I have looked). Neither the Curtis, nor the Juilliard, nor the Eastman School has a course in it, but schmalz is an undoubted ingredient of music, frequently mentioned in discussions of its effect. Unlike arpeggio, pizzicato, and portamento, it is not a technical device to be described in analytical terms, though it may utilize any or all of these. One of its more absorbing traits is that two people can rarely agree on what it is or where it can be found.

The German-English dictionary is helpful to a degree, for it gives the word an honorably alphabetical place, and defines it, in a first sense as "melted fat or grease," with a subordinate meaning: "(fig.) sentimental (music)." The etymology is clear enough from *Schweineschmalz*, meaning "lard," but nothing is provided further to clarify the musical application, which is a pity. If anything, "sentimental" (next to "effective") is the vaguest term in the musical lexicon. In using "schmalz" we only exchange an English imponderable for a German.

In an effort to clarify the language, I have for some time been conducting research on this subject, and I am finally prepared to publish my findings. There was a veritable deluge of schmalz-speaking when the Metropolitan Opera produced Johann Strauss's *Fledermaus* for the first time in decades in the season of 1950. Some, more learned in the subject than others, condemned Eugene Ormandy's finely molded,

cleanly rhythmic direction for lacking sufficient schmalz. Later in the season, when Maria Jeritza appeared as Rosalinda in a benefit performance, John Chapman of the *New York Daily News* asserted: "Eugene Ormandy led the orchestra through Johann Strauss' lovely and schmaltzy score as gaily and brightly as he did on the opening night." The altered spelling lends a touch of exoticism to the word, Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* being authority that the addition of the "t" is a corruption by way of Yiddish. It is, however, accepted in some circles as the proper English form.

Now, I submit, there is one thing that schmalz is not, and that is the music of Johann Strauss. In addition to invoking the old distinction between sentiment and sentimentality, I contend that, for the Viennese, schmalz would not be any of the Strausses—father, son, cousin, nephew, or the unrelated Richard and Oskar—but something like Kálmán's *Sari* or Hoschna's *Madame Sherry* or Caryl's *Pink Lady*, the products of *Ausländer*, thus foreign, non-genuine. An exception might be made for the third act of *Rosenkavalier*, where Octavian's deliberately sentimental "Nein nein, nein nein, Ich trink' kein' Wein" is truly purposeful schmalz, for the sake of a maudlin effect.

As Chapman's coupling—"lovely and schmaltzy"—suggests, schmalz is one of those verbal footstools pulled out for mental sitting-down purposes while the writer scratches for a better one to take its place. When nothing else is forthcoming, schmalz it is. I cite the instance of Paul Henry Lang in a discussion of a program conducted by Heitor Villa-Lobos. Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune* of the composer's *Choros* No. 6, Mr. Lang declared (issue of March 29, 1957): "At times the schmalz begins to threaten but in the nick of time the composer lets go with a jaunty

tune that bails him out with honor." According to an ancient axiom, things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, but it would be hard to make a balanced musical equation of Johann Strauss and Villa-Lobos.

One of the most searching examinations of this subject I have seen appeared in *The New Yorker* several years ago over the signature of Cornelia Otis Skinner. Entitled "Crying in the Dark," it dealt with the cathartic effect of tears, induced, in this instance, by the lachrymose aspects of the Chaplin film *City Lights*. This led Miss Skinner to recall equally "wonderful times" she had had at "heartbreaking" plays or movies, such as *Peter Ibbetson*, *L'Arlésienne*, and William Saroyan's *Time of Your Life*, when an Arab played a tune on a harmonica. She also included an episode in *La Bohème* with Rodolfo and Mimi, which she described as "the candle scene." In conclusion, Miss Skinner demanded: "If the art of the theatre—or even the schmalz of the theatre (and who is to say that good schmalz is not art?)—can give us such honest and humanizing means of release, may we not welcome them amid the exigencies of a world grown too terrible for tears?"

May we not, indeed? To Miss Skinner's query, we may add one of our own: who is to say when is schmalz good schmalz, or even good schmaltz? The original, clear proposition that schmalz is something positive of itself is now clouded by questions of whether it is good schmalz or bad. A similar emphasis was introduced into the announcement lately of a disc coupling two violin concertos, the Dvořák and the Goldmark in A minor. "There is nothing half so tasty as real good musical schmalz," it read. "Here are two of the schmalziest" (the comparative has now become superlative) "of Violin Concertos, rich in tunes, rich in or-

chestration and rich in everything that makes these composers so individualistic." And who, to echo Miss Skinner, is to say that "real good musical schmalz" is not art?

The term apparently has clear-cut commercial implications, to judge from two recent references in *Variety*. Speaking of his hopes for a tour to be made in 1958 by the orchestra of the English leader George Melachrino, S. Hurok is quoted as saying: "This is a festival of concerthall schmaltz" (something different, apparently, from outdoor schmalz). And in a review during the same month (April 1957), *Variety* described Franz Lehár's *Merry Widow* as a "schmaltzy classic." The agreed fact seems to be that schmaltz suits *Variety* to a "t."

Scanning a recent volume on Rachmaninoff, I came upon an appraisal of his Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini written after its first performance in 1934. The writer was the then critic of *The New Yorker*, Robert A. Simon, who declared: "The succession of brilliances for the piano, dramatic references to the Dies Irae, wide-open Schmalz for divided strings, and old-fashioned bravura was enough to insure success." Our friend schmalz is here promoted to the dignity of capitalization and given a descriptive modifier ("wide-open") to distinguish it, perhaps, from muted schmalz or tight-lipped schmalz.

The quest for enlightenment makes clear that whatever schmalz may be, it is something to be found in Johann Strauss, Villa-Lobos, Charles Chaplin, William Saroyan, Alphonse Daudet, Dvořák, Goldmark, Rachmaninoff, Lehár, and the orchestra of George Melachrino. Obviously it transcends not only national boundaries, but also the limitations of a single art or mode of expression. Somewhat in the spirit of Cole Porter's quizzical "Is it the good turtle soup or the

mock?" I find myself wondering which is the good schmalz, which the bad, which the real good musical schmalz and which that superior sort worthy of a capital "S." Is it Fibich's *Poème* for violin or merely its adaptation as "Moonlight Madonna?" Is it the *Méditation* from *Thaïs*, or the *Barcarolle* from *Tales of Hoffmann*? Is something inherently schmalz, or does it become so from a manner of execution? If so, how does Kostelanetz deschmalz his orchestra for Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* after schmalzing up "Stardust"? These are all matters to be determined before achieving precision in describing a thing all too imprecise of itself.

A thoroughgoing study would, of necessity, include a footnote on corn, ham, and tripe, other borrowings from the gustatory language which have been applied to the arts. "Corn," "corny," and "corn-fed" are simple enough, all being related to something countrified or rustic, hence out of date, behind the times—in a French word, *naïf*. (I have a high respect for the verbal resource of a jazz musician who, scorning a cliché to describe something he regarded as provincial, termed it "a load of hay.") "Ham" or "hammy" comes to us from theatrics of the past, from the inferior actor who could not afford proper makeup, and used hamfat instead. Tripe, as we all know, is the quintessence of the valueless, save when stewed, seasoned, and served with a costly sauce at an expensive restaurant. The *Oxford Dictionary* is somewhat evasive here, for in addition to spelling out the cant usage of tripe as "inferior stuff" or "nonsense," it adds "easy bowling." I could not, however, find any definition of "easy bowling."

It may strike some as significant that schmalz is rarely applied to things of French or Italian origin. This is very

likely because those languages have an abundance of words of their own which are equally brief and inconclusive—such as “*charmant*,” “*joli*,” “*bellissimo*,” “*simpatico*.” It is rather difficult, for that matter, to think of English schmalz, though Miss Skinner gives honorable mention, in her survey, to the moment at the climax of Noel Coward’s *Cavalcade* when the funeral procession of Queen Victoria passes, and a child says: “Mum, she must have been a very little lady!” I suspect that when Elgar wrote *largamente* or *nobilmente* under one of his tunes, what he was thinking of was his own personal kind of schmalz. Certainly in his *Salut d’amour* he achieved what some would describe as full-blown schmalz.

In a way, the use of schmalz is akin to the description of syphilis as “the Spanish disease.” That is to say, it is a euphemism for something close to home which is given a foreign name and thus stripped of identification with the speaker, or writer. “*Kitsch*,” I am sure, serves the Viennese in many circumstances to which others would apply the term schmalz. More often than not, it is an apologetic endorsement of something the listener relishes, but is reluctant to confess that he really likes. When the danger of exposure threatens, the defensive position is made secure by throwing up such bulwarks as “good” schmalz or “real good musical” schmalz to cancel an impression that one might be considered susceptible to any old kind of schmalz.

I, too, like *Die Fledermaus* and the Paganini Rhapsody of Rachmaninoff, the violin concertos of Goldmark and Dvořák. But I would no more call them schmalz than I would call the Apollo Belvedere cute. I am reminded of the young Mozart—aged seven—who loved to play on the violin of a Salzburg musician named Anton Schachtner. Because of its

soft, full tone, he called it the *Buttergeige* ("butter fiddle"). I, too, am partial to such soft full tones, but in company with Mozart think they should be of "butter" content to merit human consumption. Mozart, after all, could have, but instinctively, divinely, did not call it the *Schmalzgeige*.

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OPERA HOUSE



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♦ MAHLER, WAGNER, AND MOZART

I

WHEREVER one turns in a consideration of Mozart and his interpreters, it becomes apparent that a new way of singing and playing his music has come about in the last half century. Whether it is the old way rediscovered or a better way evolved, it is clearly different from the way of most of the nineteenth century. For one thing, any pretense to a valid tradition of vocal embellishment has now been abandoned, as, indeed, it might have in the distant but related field of jazz were records of bygone virtuosity lacking.

As in many other aspects of art, a genuine impulse gradually gave way to artificiality, the authentic to the synthetic, the expressive to the corrupt. What Rossini thought of his interpreters' ability to embellish is conveyed by the score of *Tancredi* (1813), in which, for the first time, every ornament is fully written out. Nevertheless, vocalists went on embellishing, especially in those works in which a composer had not been so foresighted.

Chorley's *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* is full of

pertinent data. The great Rubini's "taste in ornament was often questionable." On the other hand, Madame Persiani's "taste and extraordinary facility" in ornament were among her "rare musical qualities and attractions." As one with a long experience with the genuine, Chorley argued vehemently for ornaments, comparing them to the polished diamond rather than the virgin stone, and deploring the "new fangled pedantry" that thought otherwise.

One cannot miss what one has never known, especially when the quaint, tasteless practices of Battistini and Melba, D'Andrade and Galvany (as heard on records) give us a complete corruption of the basic practice. As those who had direct contact with the composer died away, and those who learned firsthand from those who had interpreted his works also vanished, liberty—as will almost always happen—began to be confused with license. The singer's whim became paramount. The conductor came generally to be regarded as providing an "accompaniment" to this or that performer's pyrotechnics.

Plainly this was a misreading of the values Mozart wrote into his great operatic scores. Quite as plainly, it is not the way—broadly speaking—his operas are now performed in the leading theaters of the world, whether in Vienna or London, New York or Milan. It is unthinkable for a composer of today to attend a performance of *Don Giovanni* and write to a friend from London, as Mendelssohn wrote in 1829:

"The other night I heard *Don Giovanni* given by the Italians: it was funny. Pellegrini sang Leporello, and acted like an ape; at the end of his first song he introduced a string of cadences out of any half a dozen Rossinian operas: the mandolin part in 'deh vieni' [*alla finestra*] was played very delicately with the bow on a violin; the second verse,

however, was duly embellished, and finished up somewhere in the skies."

Lest it be supposed that this was a performance by non-entities, it may be noted Mendelssohn also includes a reference to Malibran's "mad version of Zerlina: she made her a wild, flirting Spanish country romp," and paid tribute to the great Sontag's Donna Anna by saying to his correspondent (Devrient) "how she sings Donna Anna, you know."

At some place along the way a revaluation took place, a new influence asserted itself, a fresh insight was applied to the problem. Someone decided that the durable element, after all, was the score, even one so skimpy with markings as Mozart's, and the closer the composer's written intentions were honored, the less conspicuous would be the absence of his unwritten ones. Who that might have been and under what circumstances would be an absorbing footnote to our present enjoyment of these indispensable scores, a historic assignment of credit where credit is due.

II

As far as the history of Mozart performance in America is concerned (which means, largely speaking, at the Metropolitan Opera), the evidence is clear: the transformation occurred in the first decade of this century. Despite the attractions of the famous "ideal" and "all-star" casts of the nineties (the tenor De Lucia, for all his celebrity, was rated a "miserable" Ottavio by one New York critic), such works as *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, and *Die Zauberflöte* were little more than demonstrations of vocal capacity, however gorgeous.

It was rarely possible to have the three stage bands in the

Ballroom Scene of *Don Giovanni* play together (sometimes they were omitted entirely); it was an acceptable practice for Eames and Sembrich to prepare the "inescapable" repetition of the Letter Scene in *Figaro* by showing the audience that ink had spilled and the letter would have to be rewritten. A decade or so before, when Sembrich sang "*Gli angui d'inferno*" (the Italian version of "*Der Hölle Rache*") as an interpolation in *Il Barbiere*, the press noted that she "ended a dazzling feat of vocalization to the discordant scraping of a half dozen fiddlers."

At about the same time Bernard Shaw and other London critics were complaining bitterly of the Mozart they were hearing at Covent Garden. This is hardly surprising, for what London heard in its "season" (late spring) was closely related to what New York heard in its (fall and winter). Of so highly rated a Mozart singer as Victor Maurel, Shaw wrote (in 1891, the hundredth anniversary of Mozart's death): "I am sorry to add that alterations of Mozart's text were the order of the evening, every one of the singers lacking Mozart's exquisite sense of form and artistic dignity. Maurel, though he stopped short of reviving the traditional atrocity of going up to F sharp in the serenade, did worse things by dragging an F natural into the end of 'Finch han del vino' and two unpardonable G's into the finale of the first ballroom scene . . . thus anticipating and destroying the climax 'Odi il tuon' from the sopranos." At least Maurel sang the Don in the register for which Mozart wrote. Such mid-century singers as Garcia, Adolphe Nourrit (the first Eléazar in *La Juive*), and Mario utilized it, in transposition, as a tenor's holiday!

Even as these things were happening, a counterinfluence was coming into existence, a new force was being born. It

took some time, of course, to become effective even locally, and much longer to spread from the Continent to England and America. Considering that it corrected nearly a century of abuse of these masterpieces and created a wholly new atmosphere for them, it is not too much to say that if it did not travel with the speed of light, it traveled with more than the usual speed of enlightenment.

A vital check point occurs in the same year, 1891. The witness of value was Johannes Brahms, himself something of Mozartean (he edited the *Requiem* and other Mozart works for publication). He was visiting in Budapest in January of that year, and well-meaning friends insisted he attend the opera. On an occasion when *Don Giovanni* was to be performed, the urgings were renewed. "Nobody can interpret *Don Giovanni* for me," he protested. "That is music which I can enjoy only if I sit down and read the score to myself." Finally, he consented to go.

As the performance progressed, ill-will turned to pleasure. "Excellent! Splendid! Remarkable!" were some of his exclamations. "At last, that's just the way it ought to be done." At the end of the first act, Brahms hurried backstage, threw his arms around the conductor and said: "That was the best *Don Giovanni* I've ever heard. Not even the Imperial Opera in Vienna can rival it."

The "devil of a fellow" to whom Brahms paid this tribute was, of course, Gustav Mahler (the episode is related in the late Gabriel Engel's *Gustav Mahler, Song-Symphonist*). Then aged thirty-one, he was slowly making his way up the operatic ladder that led him next to Hamburg, then to Vienna, and finally—the order is chronological, not qualitative—to the Metropolitan. Brahms's memory of the superb *Don Giovanni* stayed with him for the rest of his life. He

was no admirer of Mahler's compositions, but he spoke forcibly for him when Mahler was a candidate for the directorship of the Vienna Opera in 1896. Following his appointment, Mahler's dynamic intellectualism brought together a group of singing artists and stage personnel which made his Vienna years (1897-1906) pivotal in the history of that theater. His briefer time at the Metropolitan was no less revolutionary.

On January 23, 1908, Mahler conducted *Don Giovanni* for the first time in New York. A typical view was that of *The Sun's* critic, W. J. Henderson. After a summary of the shortcomings of Mozart performances during the preceding decades, Henderson wrote: "All this has been changed by the artistic influence of one man, and the result was that last night's performance moved swiftly, steadily, even relentlessly toward its great climax. . . . Mr. Mahler is known in Europe as a great interpreter of Mozart and much was expected of him. Much was received." Summarizing the innovations (after enumerating them in detail), Henderson said: "In short, Mr. Mahler treated 'Don Giovanni' not as a collection of set pieces for singers, but as a drama in music, and the true nature of the noble old classic shone out as it has not in previous local performances."

Just where the emphasis lay on the musical side was clarified by the next statement: "The singers of the cast [Eames, Gadske, Sembrich, Scotti, Chaliapin, and Bonci] showed a fine feeling for this proper method of interpretation and well they might, for they were greatly the gainers by it. The beauty of their arias was enhanced by the exquisite sense of proportion which was present in the interpretation, and the interest of the audience in them was heightened by the restoration of the continuity of dramatic thought." In

the next season Mahler set a similar standard with a production of *Figaro* which remained the older New Yorkers' happiest experience of Mozart till Bruno Walter came to the podium that his mentor had occupied thirty years before.

III

Great as was Mahler's musical mentality—and perhaps only Richard Strauss, for whom he had great respect, if not full-fledged admiration, was his rival in the two worlds of creation and re-creation—one cannot believe that the “new” treatment of Mozart came to Mahler in a flash of inspiration. Indeed, as it rests on the foundations of the composer's stated purpose, it must be considered the “old” treatment reborn. The planting of a seed and a period of gestation are inherent in birth, and so it was with the revaluation of Mozart.

Like most youths of his time, Mahler was not merely an enthusiastic, but an abandoned, Wagnerite. In 1876, when he was sixteen and a student at the Vienna Conservatory, the imminent opening of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus was the topic of the hour. (His roommate, for a while, was another bearer of the Wagner standard, Hugo Wolf.) When he finally had funds, Mahler made his pilgrimage to Bayreuth in 1883. It was the summer of the year in which the *Meister* died, and *Parsifal* was, if anything, a more exalting experience than ever.

Of his reaction, Mahler later wrote: “I knew that the loftiest and most agonizing of revelations had just come to me and that it would remain with me throughout my life.” Soon Mahler underwent an apprenticeship in Prague, from which (1885) Anton Seidl departed to do his great work for Wagner in America. In Prague, Mahler conducted

Die Meistersinger, the *Ring*, and *Don Giovanni* with equal enthusiasm. Everything points to one conclusion: the discipline Wagner expected of his singers as a matter of course Mahler made mandatory in Mozart as a matter of historic justice. Bruno Walter alludes to this without elaboration in his memoir of the man who was his spiritual father. Doubtless others, such as the young Arthur Nikisch in Leipzig or Hermann Levi in Munich or Ernst von Schuch in Dresden proceeded along similar lines, though not in so many opera houses or so intensively.

In presenting these views originally, I was stimulated to a longer reach into the historical past by a communication from Arthur W. Marget (a Wagner scholar as well as director of the Division of International Finance, Federal Reserve System). In recognizing Mahler as the influential figure I projected, Marget developed at considerable length the contributions of Wagner himself to the impending revolution. First in Dresden, where he was *Kapellmeister* for five years before the uprising of 1848 made him a political fugitive, and then in Zurich, Wagner turned his unparalleled mental endowments to the needs of his great operatic predecessor. When Ludwig of Bavaria summoned him to Munich in 1864, Wagner took along an elaborate plan for the reform of the Bavarian Theater in which a new concept of Mozart was fundamental. From his own boyhood studies in Prague, Wagner recalled conversations with Dionysus Weber, who had witnessed Mozart's preparations of *Figaro* in that city.

There can be no doubt that Wagner was as sensitive to abuses of Mozart as to abuses of Beethoven. However, he had his own creative destiny to fulfill, with only occasional interludes for re-creative activities. Hans von Bülow might have carried out his program in Munich, had not Wagner's appropriation of his wife, Cosima, wrecked that disciple-

ship. Bülow went on to his work in Meiningen and Hamburg, and Hermann Levi enjoyed the opportunities of Munich, making it a Mozart center, though one in which *Così fan tutte* had an altered text when he gave it in 1897.

What Wagner comprehended, and inspired his disciples to recognize, was the need for a new person in the composer-listener chain, the need for someone to deputize for the composer as music spread from its point of origin to distant places, or to take his place after his death. In the eighteenth century and through the lifetime of Beethoven, music was produced largely under the direction of the composer or in his presence. Hence there was not even the need for elaborate markings to clarify the composer's purpose: he would be present to explain his wishes. The notion of "posterity" or performances where a "style" was unknown emerged only slowly.

However as a repertory accumulated, it became the obligation of such men as Weber, Berlioz, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and, of course, Liszt and Wagner, to function as the "composer's deputy." At first an informal manifestation of artistic sympathy, this position eventually became a functional part of a musical career, in which a sophisticated, specialized capacity for conducting—with all it meant in a broad knowledge of musical styles and a refined sense of musical judgment—was as much a recognized specialty as was proficiency on the violin or piano.

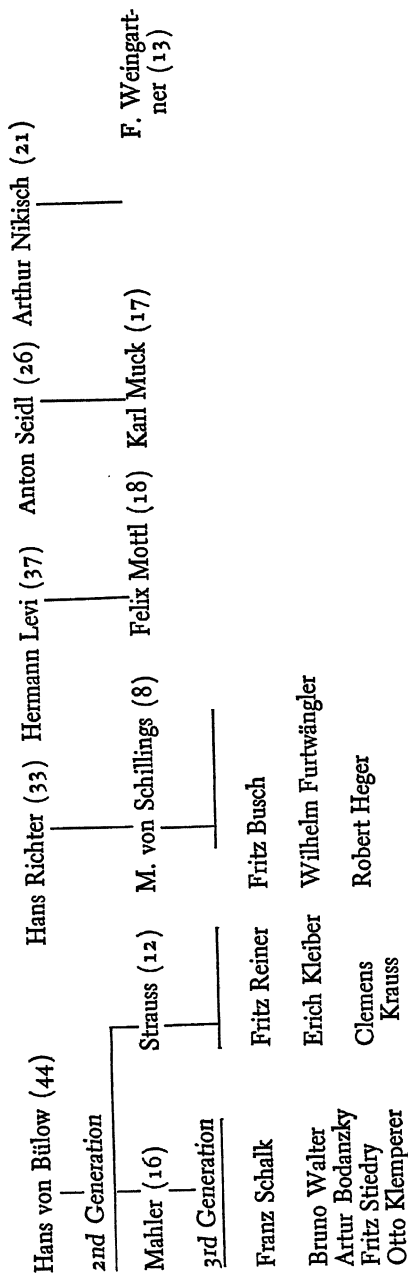
IV

Wagner, certainly, saw all this in the making, but even his giant energies could not make him the personification of it while he carried out his creative program. However, his specific practice—the performance, under his supervision, of

than his general preachment. When the leading performers from all over Germany had been gathered together to study and learn and develop an ensemble, a new ideal of musical theater was at work in the world. Besides serving as the professional embodiment of Wagner's ideals, Bayreuth served as an academy in which the bright young men of the time could acquire from the ground up an experience inconceivable elsewhere.

Oddly enough, the very complexity of Wagner's scores was a decisive factor. In them, without the authority of the man with the baton, all would be chaos. Once this became clear, the singer's sun had started to set, the conductor's to rise. In place of the time-beating artisans of old came a group of sophisticated artists with the knowledge and the authority to serve their "deputy" function properly, even to transcend it. Proper performance of Wagner's orchestral scores also required musicians of greater technical ability than ever before. When a horn-player had developed the skill to perform in *Siegfried* or *Götterdämmerung*, he also had the skill to play the flourishes in Beethoven's "Abscheulicher" (which Chorley lamented as "unplayable," performed accurately only "once in twenty times"). And, by extension, the intricate horn-writing in its prototype, "Per pietà" in Mozart's *Così*.

As indicated, Bayreuth served this end in two ways: as the professional embodiment of Wagner's intentions and as an academy in which younger men, magnetized by the works and will of the *Meister*, were imbued with the knowledge, as well as the fervor, to pursue independent careers elsewhere. A startling proportion of the prominent conductors of the past seventy-five years either worked at Bayreuth, or were closely influenced by men who had:



4th Generation: Szell? Karajan? Kempe? Steinberg?

The "generations" are almost mathematically spaced: the "first" generation (with the exception of Bülow) took part in the opening Bayreuth Festival in 1876 or, as in the case of Nikisch, in the cornerstone-laying ceremonies of 1872. The figures in parentheses show the ages, in 1876, of the musicians in question. Strauss and von Schillings were assistants in festivals of the '80s and '90s. Seidl was principal conductor of the Angelo Neumann Traveling Wagner Theater (1882-3), and one of his successors was Muck. This "second generation" came to prominence around 1900.* The third generation emerged as influential leaders in the mid-twenties (Walter, Furtwängler, Busch, Kleiber, Reiner, Klemperer, etc.

The "fourth" generation is hardly defined as yet.

V

To assign precedence in a development of such complexity over a period of nearly seventy-five years of operatic history is of course impossible. Yet there are contemporary evidences of a time of decision and of the persons prominently involved. One was the year 1887, the hundredth anniversary of the first production of *Don Giovanni*, which was celebrated in a variety of ways by a variety of persons. One was Ferruccio Busoni, who wrote a lengthy paper on the opera, saying: "As an Italian I must substantiate the sad fact of the disappearance of *Don Giovanni* from Italian repertories. . . . The capacity for good singing is dying out gradually [our Golden Age was yet to come!] . . . the audience . . . finds the music old-fashioned and childish. Who knows how much there is in *Don Giovanni* that we are still not able to grasp and of which perhaps only a new genius will inform us?" Another was Bülow, who celebrated the day with a ceremonial *Don Giovanni* in Hamburg, the year with a Mozart festival including *Idomeneo* and *Die Zauberflöte*. Another might have been Arthur Nikisch, whose Mozart conducting (in Leipzig) was extolled by no less a contemporary than Edvard Grieg in an article written for *Century Magazine* in 1894.

Rather remarkably, in the same letter in which the young Richard Strauss expresses his regret to Hans von Bülow for being unable to "join in celebrating the 'Don Giovanni' jubilee in the Hamburg Theater" (October 29, 1887), there is the following:

"I made a new very attractive acquaintance in Herr Mahler, who appeared to me a highly intelligent musician and conductor: one of the few modern conductors who

knows about tempo modification. He expressed splendid ideas generally, particularly about Wagner's tempi (opposed to the present accepted Mozart conductors)."

Mahler was then in Leipzig between his Prague and Budapest phases, with Hamburg and Vienna to follow. He was twenty-seven; Strauss was twenty-three. I need not dwell on the significance of the last parenthetical statement.*

One might extend the historic progression to the present day by recognizing Bülow's two disciples, Mahler and Strauss, as the moving spirits in two divergent aspects of Mozart performance. From Mahler, as exemplified in Vienna and New York, derives the kind of Mozart heard under the best conditions in the large opera theaters of the world. From Strauss, as exemplified in the bygone Residenztheater of Munich, the kind of Mozart heard in the intimate surroundings of Glyndebourne, the Petit Trianon at Versailles, the Piccola Scala in Milan, or wherever else conditions simulating those of Mozart's time can be created. Salzburg, which is something between the largest and the smallest, was vitally influenced in its early phases by Strauss himself and by Bruno Walter as deputy for the deputy Mahler.

Are all the battles won; is the last war for common sense and artistic justice at an end? Far from it. When Salzburg,

* Having quoted the statement from another source as it appears above, I was startled to find, in the Boosey and Hawkes edition of the Bülow-Strauss letters edited by Willi Schuh and Franz Trenner, and translated by Anthony Gishford, the following: "He expressed splendid ideas generally, particularly about Wagner's tempi (opposed to the present accepted Wagner conductors)." A German text, a volume of Strauss documents, also edited by Franz Trenner, and published by C. H. Beck, in Munich (1954), showed Gishford guilty of a singularly misleading typographical error. The passage reads: "... einer der wenigen modernen Dirigenten, der um Tempomodifikation weiss und überhaupt prächtige Ansichten, besonders über Wagners Tempi (entgegen den jetzt akkreditierten Mozartdirigenten) aufwies." Nor do I think the subtly tinged "akkreditierten" is properly rendered by "present accepted": it is something more like "officially endorsed."

as in a recent festival, still gives *Figaro* in German, the ghost of Mozart might cry out: "Spare me my friends: my enemies I can take care of myself." Eternal vigilance is the price not only of political freedom, but also of musical justice. Mahler, through Wagner, revealed the grandeur of Mozart as we know it. Each new performance is a skirmish in the continuing battle to preserve that grandeur.

♦ FOREVER AFTER

READERS of Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* are well aware that much in the lives of the people in the play is not disclosed in the acted version. After Shaw the playwright drops the curtain, Shaw the philosopher goes on for fifteen printed pages discussing the future lives of his characters. Offhand I don't know of any composer or librettist who gave one of his operatic creations much further thought after he reached the final double bar, though Puccini's letters are full of references to his female characters (particularly Mimi and Madama Butterfly) in terms almost of physical affection.

Yet there is virtually no opera without its unanswered questions. Presumably Magdalene and David are part of a double wedding in Nuremberg with Walther and Eva after the curtain falls on the last act of *Meistersinger*, and presumably all lived happily forever after. But is it reasonable to suppose that Donna Anna would have much use for Don Ottavio after his ineffectual efforts on her behalf—a stone statue does a better job of apprehending the libertine than the living “hero” with sword in scabbard—in *Don Giovanni*? I rather doubt it.

These are things that one is fairly sure about, which may be considered as resolved when the curtain falls, even though we are not specifically told so. But what about the son of Cio-Cio-San and Lieutenant Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*? We know that when he comes back to claim the off-

pring, he finds that his Japanese "wife" has committed suicide. Presumably he takes the boy away (probably changing his name to something like Abraham Lincoln Pinkerton, or he could scarcely go through life known, as he is in the libretto, as Trouble). If Pinkerton took him back on the gunboat *Abraham Lincoln*, which has brought Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton to Nagasaki, the passenger list would have been even more peculiar than when it arrived in Japanese waters with Mrs. Pinkerton aboard.

Perhaps it is a mistake to think seriously about the plots and people of opera. But opera is an art that thrives on repetition, and after a twentieth or thirtieth viewing of a *Meistersinger* or a *Butterfly* it is possible to think of the characters as quite real. There are so many operas in which the problem is automatically solved by everyone doing away with himself or being done away with that composers and librettists look upon any other outcome as unexpected and therefore not requiring further explanation. Perhaps Richard Wagner gave the first sign of real genius for the stage when at the age of thirteen he wrote a tragedy (compounded of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*) entitled *Leubold, ein Trauerspiel*. Forty-two men died in the course of the action, and some of them had to be brought back in the fifth act as ghosts in order to complete the story. A youth with such a talent for the essentials of opera would, obviously, go far.

From *Orfeo* down to *Salome* the prevailing fashion required (if the proper tragic note was to be sustained) that everybody of much consequence be given final shrift—damnation or salvation—before the curtain falls. I need mention only *Lucia*, *Trovatore*, *Aïda*, *Rigoletto*, *Faust*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tosca*, *Pagliacci*, and *Götterdämmerung* as samples of the blighted lives to be encountered in the course of

the average happy-go-lucky opera season. Even in such more sophisticated matters as *Tristan* and *Pelléas* (not to mention *Samson*, in which the slaughter is wholesale), the worst is always the best that can be expected.

The penalty of turning serious thought to operas and their characters is intensified by the many occasions on which I have been exposed to such works as *Tannhäuser*, *Tosca*, or *Rosenkavalier*, in which some of the most important characters in the action never appear on the stage. No one ever made a reputation as the Pope in *Tannhäuser*, or José's mother in *Carmen*, or Alfredo's sister in *Traviata*—despite their crucial importance to the plot—for the simple reason that they are greatly honored but altogether unsung.

Some of Puccini's most dramatic invention is devoted to making real the image of "L'Attavanti," whom Cavaradossi has used as the model for his Madonna in a belief that the beautiful visitor to the chapel was a model of devoutness, so to speak, rather than merely the sister of Angelotti, planning to aid his escape from prison. *Tosca's* jealousy of the lady, in fact, makes her Scarpia's pawn in the game to trap Cavaradossi. It was tantalizing of Illica and Giacosa to make so much of her, but not to bring her on stage at the end of Act I so that we could see whether all the talk about her was justified.

For my taste, the most conspicuous absentee in opera is the Feldmarschall in *Der Rosenkavalier*. He hovers over the action, especially in the first act, when the Marschallin and her young lover Octavian are in imminent peril of discovery. There is even one moment when the Marschallin thinks she hears his gruff voice in the foyer and conceals Octavian behind a screen. That it is Baron Ochs who appears and begins a flirtation with Octavian in his/her disguise as a

maid is of course the flame over which the whole of this romantic tempest is brewed.

For that matter, had the Field Marshal come back at any time in the next two or three days, he would have made a complete confusion of the quadrilateral "triangle" that Hofmannsthal devised. This serves one aspect of the dramatist's purpose, though it would have been illuminating to discover whether he had chocolate or coffee in the morning (his wife was a chocolate-drinker, which might have been at the bottom of their difficulty), whether he was another Ochs or a dandy, how justified the Marschallin was in her amour. But no—he stayed conveniently away, leading his troops or hunting his boar and letting his erring wife work out her own problems.

A singular instance of an opera based on the audience's belief in the validity of the unseen character is Wolf-Ferrari's *Secret of Suzanne*. This makes such a to-do about a wife concealing a lover (because of the odor of cigarette smoke in the air) that furniture is smashed, angry words are exchanged, and Count Gil turns spy on his own spouse. Unfortunately Wolf-Ferrari (or his librettist Enrico Golisciani) could hardly anticipate the day when any woman could be a cigarette-smoker without her husband's giving it a second thought. Thus what was Suzanne's "secret" in 1910 is now a commonplace, and a charming score—plus a nonexistent off-stage character—has been lost to the operatic world.

Perhaps the only composer to concern himself seriously with such matters, and particularly the after-curtain life of certain favorite ones, was Jules Massenet. In 1894, ten years after his first treatment of the Abbé Prevost's *Manon*, he returned to write a one-act drama entitled *Le Portrait de Manon*, and in 1905 he borrowed from Mozart to give us his

view of the many-sided page in *Chérubin*. Let us not forget, however, that Massenet wrote no fewer than twenty-two operas: subject-matter may have been difficult to come by after a dozen or so. Gustave Charpentier succumbed to the temptation of writing a sequel to *Louise* entitled *Julien*, which was unsuccessful even with Enrico Caruso in the title role and Geraldine Farrar as the spirit of the expired heroine. Here the miscalculation was psychological, for the appeal of his one outstanding accomplishment certainly resides chiefly in the character of Louise, not Julien.

An interesting inversion of the "forever after" aspect of opera librettos fastened itself upon one of the peerless "reformers" of the operatic stage, whose gift for the idiom—as previously observed—asserted itself as early as the age of thirteen. Much is made throughout *Lohengrin* of his secret—who he was and where he came from. So much is made of it that Elsa, womanlike, is eventually compelled to ask the fatal question, whereupon Lohengrin says that the conditions under which he married her have been violated and he must go away. Before he does, however, he launches into his famous *Gralserzählung*, "*In fernem Land,*" whose climax comes when he proclaims "*Mein Vater Parzifal trägt eine Krone . . . ich, bin Lohengrin genannt.*"

This was a likely enough story at the time, for it probably had not occurred to Wagner in 1848, when *Lohengrin* was completed, that he would come to deal with the subject of *Parsifal* a quarter of a century later. In the whole of the huge work there is, of course, no mention of Lohengrin or the mate by whose agency he might have been conceived. The prescribed future for Parsifal, as the curtain falls, is his noble duty to carry on as the principal Knight of the Grail in place of Amfortas.

No doubt it was such dilemmas as these that troubled Shaw during his years as a music critic, and finally influenced him to seek a more rational occupation, even if only as a playwright. It is just as well he did not live to see *Pygmalion* itself wedded to music to live forever after as *My Fair Lady*. For, he would have discovered, all his careful documentation of what happened to Liza Doolittle and Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering and Freddie Eynsford Hill was calmly disregarded by men who somehow instinctively grasped the proposition that if you take music to a subject you take sense out of it. Now Liza is marrying Professor Higgins rather than Freddy, though Shaw's very last words on the subject are: "Galatea never does quite like *Pygmalion*: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable."

♦ THE BARBER OF FIGARO

WHEN Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* and Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia* are given in the same opera season (a fairly frequent occurrence in these days of Mozartean popularity), the listener who knows both can hardly avoid spending part of the time at the performance of one trying to correlate its happenings with those of the other. Spoiled, perhaps, by the logic of Wagner's *Ring*, in which Wotan is always a bass-baritone, Brünnhilde a soprano from start to finish, and even the worm does not turn (vocally), I find it distracting for the Almaviva of Rossini to be a *tenore di grazia* and the Almaviva of Mozart a lyric baritone (on some occasions, a high bass-baritone). Surely he could not have changed so much in the three years that elapse between the two dramatic sequences.

Most opera fanciers are aware that *Figaro* and *Il Barbiere* have a common literary source—the writings of the French wit, patriot and antiroyalist Caron de Beaumarchais. What they perhaps do not realize is that these most famous settings of Figaro and his intrigues (there have, of course, been others) were written in a sequence reversing their fictional chronology. Mozart's inspired comedy, dealing with a later phase of the count and Countess Almaviva, was written in 1785–6, when Beaumarchais's "rights of man" sentiments were a novelty in Europe, as topical as the works of Bernard Shaw in his day. Rossini's score, dealing with an earlier phase of the whole, appeared thirty years later.

Anybody who has thought about it all must conclude that

the Rosina of Rossini is a mere bird-brain, a flighty miss of sixteen plucked from the shelter of her ward by the impetuous Almaviva. Here is a Count who is not above conniving with the factotum Figaro, disguising himself first as a commoner, then as a drunken soldier, finally as a fictitious music master, to secure the girl he wants. Mozart's Countess (the name Rosina is barely mentioned in *Le Nozze*) is a creature of regal bearing and somewhat disillusioned worldliness, the Count a suave philanderer who would never stoop to a disguise to achieve his ends, though he tolerates one for Susanna in his pursuit of her. Figaro, no longer a mere barber and handyman, but the steward of Almaviva's household, is anything but the common farceur of Rossini.

Is the difference in the character of the two operatic works wholly a matter of the divergent genius of the two composers? We well know that the *Barbiere* most often seen today is no real representation of Rossini, who wrote his celebrated female role for the kind of agile low voice required in *Cenerentola* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*. The piping coloraturas who pre-empt it to primp and posture for top-note-conscious audiences are something else than he intended. Even so, the figures of his drama are basically stereotypes, with little of the dimensional humanness of their Mozartean counterparts. The Countess of Mozart is as real a woman as Verdi's Desdemona or Hofmannsthal's Marschallin, his Figaro hardly less real. Rossini's Figaro is merely an Italian baritone, as frisky as nature and his *avoirdufois* permit.

Obviously Mozart could not have written "*Largo al factotum*" any more than Rossini could have written "*Deh vieni non tardar*." But an investigation of sources provides the additional evidence that what the two men had to work with was, in essence, quite different. *Le Barbier de Séville* was planned

by Beaumarchais as a kind of musical diversion, with interpolated Spanish songs suitable to the locale. *Le Mariage de Figaro*, on the other hand, was from the first a play to make its appeal through the sense of what was said and done. To serve his satiric purpose, Beaumarchais chose to say with laughter what could not be said seriously at the time. And what he chose to say, that a double standard prevailed not merely for men and women, but also for the upper and lower classes of the same sex, was sufficiently daring for a censor to suppress its production in Paris for several years. Royalty-conscious Vienna, of course, was much less hospitable than provincial Prague to Mozart's *Figaro*.

The conclusion would seem to be, then, that Beaumarchais was as much involved in the change of emphasis as the composers, and that his characters have little relationship other than the continuity of names. But this conclusion would exclude two other contributors of whom no mention has yet been made: Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, and Rossini's librettist, Cesare Sterbini. Each imposed himself on the original with a wholly personal result—with this difference however; Da Ponte's script is remarkable for what he put in, Sterbini's for what he left out.

For example, Sterbini tells us virtually nothing of the previous relationship of Figaro and the Count when they happen to meet under Rosina's window. They recognize each other, the libretto mentions, but why? From Beaumarchais we learn that they were old partners in intrigue, and that Figaro had actually worked for the Count previously. Moreover, as a good dramatist should, Beaumarchais clarifies from the first the qualities in Figaro which take a decisive part in the later happenings. The Count recalls that he had been a good servant, but of somewhat dubious character. In Figaro's

answer are planted the roots of the rebellious sapling that grows to a tree in *Le Nozze*: "My Lord, you rich folk always would have us poor ones entirely without faults. . . . According to the Perfection you fine Gentlemen expect in your servants, does your Excellency think many of your Acquaintances worth the office of Valet-de-Chambre?"

Sterbini did not consider this observation relevant to his and Rossini's problem—to produce, in thirteen days, a work that would make the public forget Paisiello's previous *Barbiere*. On the other hand, Sterbini did not adhere slavishly to the original script of Beaumarchais, for, if he had, the opera would have lacked one of its most famous elements: "*La Calunnia*." It appeared in a revised version, after Beaumarchais had himself been the object of calumny and knew whereof he spoke.

In the years between 1775, when *Le Barbier* was new, and 1781, when *Le Mariage* was completed (public performance was not permitted until three years later), a number of things happened. Among them was the American Revolution, in which Beaumarchais had more than a passing part. He organized a service for providing ships and arms to the colonies on such a scale that his estate had claim on the United States Government for more than a million dollars when he died in 1799. Thus the "social philosophy" or the impulse to protest, which had only been suggested in *Le Barbier*, had a full and factual maturity before Beaumarchais completed *Le Mariage*.

In choosing a character of French dramatic writing known as the "*valet de comédie*" for his central figure, Beaumarchais was acting neither by chance nor without intent. The witty servant, the pitiless reflector of his master's foibles, was current long before Beaumarchais, of course. But the qualities

making Figaro-Mozart a more consequential fellow than Figaro-Rossini are clearly spelled out by Beaumarchais: he had elevated himself from the servant class to the rank of journeyman, or barber: he had dabbled in verse-writing, written a play, and been victimized in a cabal. It was only after these various experiences that he returned to the Count's service, as we find him on the verge of his marriage to Susanna. Is it any wonder, then, that a sense of his own worth fostered in him the revolutionary sentiment that, so far as legal and moral rights were concerned, he was as good a man as his master?

Beaumarchais makes this exquisitely apparent in the long, sharp-tempered monologue of the garden scene, as Figaro waits for the Count to take the bait that will trap him. It is cued by the rhetorical question Figaro flings at the audience: "How came you to be the rich and mighty Count Almaviva?" countered by the sarcastic: "Why, truly, you gave yourself the trouble to be born." With which Figaro compares his own "accident of birth": "Son of I know not who, born I know not how, and brought up to I know not what." (His parentage by Don Bartolo and Marcellina was operatically contrived.)

No doubt in deference to the sensitivities of Emperor Joseph, Da Ponte omitted all this from the libretto, preserving only the beginning tirade against women ("*Aprite un po' quegl'occhi.*") But Mozart did not omit it from the music he wrote, even if it was not in the text. The two coincide in the famous "*Se vuol ballare*" of Act I, a pure invention of Da Ponte. In it is expressed the anger of Figaro at his realization that the Count was determined to utilize his feudal right to Susanna before her marriage: "If you want to dance, I'll play

the tune." (In a rare instance of an early leading-motive, Mozart reverts to it in Act II when the conspirators plot a way to trap the Count.)

Beaumarchais's lampoon would probably be no more than a curio today had it not become a frame for the teeming imagination of Mozart. Versions of it were played almost immediately in England and Germany, but it is by Mozart's genius that we have preserved for us, in the spirit of the time in which it was born, the atmosphere of what Napoleon himself later described as "the Revolution in action."

Opera houses are notoriously unenthusiastic about projects labeled, however vaguely, "musicological," but it would be a service for one to give us, sometime, sequential performances of *Il Barbiere* and *Le Nozze* conceived in terms of the factors that relate rather than separate them. Doubtless a festival would be the proper setting for such an enterprise, and as Glyndebourne does its *Figaro* regularly, it would be a matter of merely adding the right kind of *Barber* to it. (One can hardly conceive of any *Barber* in Salzburg, even less of the "right kind.")

This would begin with such a baritone as the late Giuseppe de Luca, who made his Metropolitan debut in the Rossini work in 1915, and performed in a Mozart revival of the following year. He would bring Rossini's *Figaro* something of elegance borrowed from Mozart, and to Mozart something of lightness and volatility inherent in the Italian creation. For the Countess-Rosina, one need look no further than to Victoria de los Angeles, an admired performer of Mozart who has also considered "*Una voce poco fa*" within her ken. Dr. Bartolo presents no serious challenge: such a *buffo* as Fernando Corena (the heir apparent to the comic throne of Salvatore Baccaloni) has done both. With Almaviva, how

ever, one confronts a problem, for the *tenorino* who can transform himself into a baritone at will would probably be doing more profitable things than working out such a musical charade. I can think only of the late Louis Graveure, who changed from a baritone to a tenor "overnight," but even he had to settle for one range or the other.

Perhaps those who care to pursue the interaction of the Figaros to the ultimate would find it simpler, on the whole, to arrange a pastiche in which "*Se vuol ballare*" and "*Largo al factotum*" might come in succession, along with "*Una voce poco fa*" and "*Porgi, amor.*" Here, certainly, would be something fresh, tempting, and new. Or, at least, it was new when done in an English version at the National Theater in New York in 1836.

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♦ OH, SAY CAN YOU "C"?

AS PERSONS closely concerned with it are aware, music has its own considerable secrets locked in a Pandora's Box that no one would willingly open. Occasionally, however, an innocent outsider turns to the not-so-innocent insider for enlightenment, in which circumstance there is no choice but to turn the key and let the contents of the box cause such havoc as they may. As on the occasion when I received the following letter:

Dear Sir:

After seeing many operas we are confused as to what sounds correct or not. We have heard "Pagliacci" sung by Jussi Bjoerling, Kurt Baum and Ramon Vinay. In the aria "Vesti la Giubba" Baum and Bjoerling both seem to hit what we think is a high C. Vinay sounds quite lower. The question is: Must they hit that high C? Is it possible for the music to be written for a C and then changed before the performance to suit the tenor? It sounds harmonious but some of us are sure he was too low.

Sincerely,
W. G. P.

This is the kind of basic question at which one shudders. To deprive anyone, even an operagoer, of his natural state of innocence, is a serious responsibility. But the correspondent has made his own choice, and only one course is possible: to provide him with the enlightenment he desires. "Yes, W. G. P., it is possible for the music to be written for a C and then changed before the performance. It is done to suit not only tenors, but also basses, baritones, mezzos, and sopranos.

It could happen; it does happen; it will continue to happen as long as opera is given."

I did not hear the *Pagliacci* to which the correspondent refers, so I cannot match my recollection with his. It is, in fact, improbable that Vinay in his *Canio* days would have required such assistance, for the top tone in "*Vesti la giubba*" is not C, but A, and if a tenor requires indulgence for that, he should turn in his card. (I have, in fact, heard Leonard Warren sing "*Vesti la giubba*" as written, in informal baritone mockery of some of his higher-voiced colleagues, which suggests that it should be well within the range of anyone professionally engaged in the tenor way of life.) For Vinay, it may be said that his dark voice could, conceivably, "sound lower," even on the same note, than Bjoerling's brighter one. It's all a matter of overtones.

But the practice itself, known as "taking the music down," is routine procedure in the repertory opera theaters of the world. Whether it is an honorable, or an admirable, or even a defensible practice is quite another matter. In some circumstances, the strain for one top tone early in an evening's singing may put the performer out of vocal sorts for the whole performance. Thus caution is the better part of valor. But it is no credit to the so-called artist involved, and will be mentally registered as a demerit by his backstage listeners, whether or not it is recognized by those out front.

It is no easy matter to detect the evasion when it is occurring, unless one has an acute memory of exact sound and a close knowledge of the score or, better still, absolute pitch. The latter is the faculty that permits immediate identification of any pitch. It is an endowment of nature which—as it happens—many excellent musicians do not possess. It flourishes particularly among string players, developed by the constant

listening for their own pitch as they practice. Others often have what is called relative pitch—meaning the ability to identify notes at random, once the tonal center (or key) has been determined. As far as the opera house is concerned, absolute pitch is a kind of sixth sense. It permits one to hear what some performers might like to keep unheard.

Unlike programs for athletic events, in which deviations from a norm will be faithfully noted—how much added weight a horse is carrying in a stake race, or how many strokes a golfer is handicapped, or the time allowance for a runner in a foot race—programs in the opera house are notoriously noncommittal about what is actually going on. Often, indeed, the performance comes down to a kind of guessing game between singers and audience as to how much of a given score is performed, and how. There are certain arias (“*Che gelida manina*” in *Bohème* is one, “*Salut, demeure*” in *Faust* is another) in which the rarity is to hear a tenor sing in the written key, rather than “take the music down.” (Just as some of the most beautiful music Mozart wrote for Donna Elvira to sing in *Don Giovanni* is systematically omitted because it contains roudes of which the average soprano would rather pretend ignorance.) The most shameless bravado, however, is that practiced by tenors who transpose “*Che gelida manina*” down, but add to the final chord of the act (off stage with Mimi) a top note that Puccini did not write, and therefore did not want.

The musical judgment prevailing in the opera house is so inverted that a performer conscientious to the extent of singing the music exactly as it was written may receive nothing but scorn for such pains. Verdi, as is well known, wrote no top E for Gilda at the end of “*Caro nome*” in *Rigoletto*, but it has become a point of honor for any performer aspiring to

audience approval to make the grand gesture whether the note is in her voice or not. Similarly, the ending of "*Celeste Aïda*," which Verdi marks not only *pianissimo*, but also *morendo* (dying away), to convey Radames's ecstatic reverie as he extols the "celestial" beauty of Aïda. In a quarter century of professional listening to operas I have heard the effect made as Verdi desired it exactly once: by the Swedish tenor Torsten Ralf. Instead of walking to the footlights and bellowing his reverie to the audience, he stood quietly in his place, shading the sound expertly. His reward was practically total silence.

The game of addition and subtraction is played not only without rhyme or reason, but also without rules. It is an instructive experience to take, as some of us have, a score to bear on a broadcast performance of such a work as *Pagliacci* or *Cavalleria Rusticana*—or to a typical recording of either. The first surprising discovery is there is no "high note" for the baritone midway through the "*Prologo*," though one is always sung. The next discovery is several other "vulgaritys" of Leoncavallo and Mascagni are indiscretions not of the composers, but of their interpreters. It is "they"—following in blind obedience to the tradition that says if you have high notes, you must use them—who overspice the already nationally flavored salami. Verdi is another whose works are regularly abused, though by some kind of tacit agreement, liberties are not permitted to the licensed performers of *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

Perhaps the most discussed recent transposition related to Renata Tebaldi's Violetta, whose "*Sempre libera*" came out in G flat rather than A flat—a full tone lower than written. "Horrors!" cried the purists. "Nonsense!" responded the more indulgent, "isn't it done all the time?" Or, to put it

another way, those who on the whole did not think 'successful Violetta regarded the transposition as their contention, whereas the pleased found it defen

There is, however, one fundamental point to l "Sempre libera" is not in the category of episode transposed. Verdi wrote for the female voice of his a singer who could manage its modest florid demand written key, the top tone is a C with a glancing I readily as the pathetic sentiments of "*Dite alla gio* Act II, or the tragic "*Addio del passato*" of Act IV. its way is expressive of a phase of Violetta's musica ality; appropriate execution of each adds, in the e totality. To evade the responsibility Verdi put u performer, even in one place, seemed (to those wh the Tebaldi procedure an unprideful concession to ience) unworthy of a serious artist.

Moreover, the procedure affected adversely othe of the performance. I do not refer to the sinking s accompanying the abrupt lowering of the pitch d orchestral interlude or to the automatic disregard of poser's direction: "*assai brillante.*" There is a "Sempre libera" at which Alfredo adds his voice to V from off stage. Under the circumstances, the teno option: as a gentleman, and doubtless a lesser memb company than the Violetta, he must accede to wha venient for her, but is decidedly inconvenient for sing his supporting line of the duet a full tone lo suits *his* best range. If there tended to be som whether it was the tenor Germont or his baritor singing, the fault was neither Verdi's nor that of the Germonts.

After a considerable experience in the opera ho

rational faculties tend to become a liability rather than an asset. I profess not to be a high-note fancier, yet there are circumstances in which they are sorely missed. I find the embellishments some performers apply to "*Una voce poco fa*," for example, like sequins—too numerous, too cheap, and essentially flimsy. But there are embellishments in Mozart, Bellini, even Donizetti, which cannot be spared lest they leave the tonal design incomplete.

This matter of tonal design, I suppose, reaches the heart of the question. A soprano can be a fine Butterfly whether or not she can sing a top D flat, but if she is forced to settle for a B flat as the climax of her entrance, I feel cheated, slightly let down. It is a further fact that the D flat is not an "ossia" (optional) embellishment of the vocal line; it is the natural break of the melodic wave, which otherwise does not crest as it should. In other words the D flat is Puccini's preference: the B flat is the soprano's convenience. Perhaps if Puccini had been wholly meticulous, he would have gone back and prepared the scene differently, so that it would come out to a C—which would not pose such a hazard (mental, if nothing else) to a soprano with a long evening's work ahead of her. But in the key in which it falls, the Butterfly who cannot reach the D flat is, to me, less a Butterfly than she might be, whatever else the evening may hold.

With Wagner the case is somewhat, though not wholly, the same. As most are aware, he was not one to write indiscriminate high notes, least of all for vocal display. In the whole of the *Ring* there are no more than four places in which the Brünnhilde is required to say whether or not she can C. The famous "*Ho-jo-to-ho*" is one; the Siegfried Love Duet contains two others, and the parting from Siegfried

(*Götterdämmerung*) poses another. By some mysterious "tradition" a soprano is always applauded at the end of the fairly bromidic "*Ho-jo-to-ho*"—though never elsewhere in a *Ring* performance—whether or not she sings the C's (more often than not, she does not). Whether she does or does not seems to me a mere matter of tidiness, of keeping the edges of her vocal work clean and neat. However, the C's are different in *Siegfried*: they express, the first time, the surge of exultation as Brünnhilde passes, metaphorically, from girlhood to womanhood, and second (at the very end) her ecstatic surrender to Siegfried.

In these instances, as in the two similar requirements in *Tristan* (in Isolde's narrative and in Act II), the accumulated tensions are such that much of the emotion associated with the character is conveyed by the high-flung top tones. If they are free, soaring, pure, and, above all, unconstrained—then we can believe in the divinity of Brünnhilde or the heroic stature of Isolde. But if they are cramped, throttled, edgy, and worst of all, off pitch—then we are confronted, all too plainly, with another mortal struggling to make a living. In many of her performances, Kirsten Flagstad affirmed the shining image of what every Brünnhilde or Isolde should—to begin with—sound like. Others, to be sure, have driven closer to the substance of these characters, allowing for vocal frailties from time to time. She, however, was one whose performance did not make a man sorry he was endowed with absolute pitch.

♦ THE CLIQUE VS. THE CLAQUE

NO SOONER is a new director installed in a major opera theater, whether Covent Garden, the Metropolitan, or La Scala, than he is called upon to answer, as a first question: what do you intend to do about the claque? The answers may vary in phraseology, but they inevitably amount to (a) there is no claque in this theater, or (b) I intend to abolish it. Whichever answer is offered, the next performance of anything is likely to prove the presence of astral bodies flapping wings in a curious simulation of organized applause. We read of it being abolished at the Paris Opéra in 1830, at La Scala in 1890, at the Metropolitan in 1915, but, like the poor, organized applause is always 'with us, whether produced by a clique or a claque.

For those to whom the distinction may seem tenuous, it may be stated this way: a clique is to a claque as a crime of passion is to Murder, Inc. In the one instance, the performer profits from a purely amateur enthusiasm generated out of an ecstatic regard for his, or her, voice, looks, or even musical ability. In the other, the artist pays, in advance, for services to be rendered, to assure himself that the performance is in good hands (and, in this instance, it is primarily the hands he is hiring).

The question, however, is somewhat broader in scope than the harvest for the performer: what of the mere ticket-buyer who has been attracted not alone by a tenor or a soprano, but also by Bellini, Mozart, or Verdi? From my vantage point at the Metropolitan—a theater of particular sensitivity in this respect, as the standees who comprise cliques and claques

ring the orchestra seats from pit to pole—observing for more than two decades has convinced me that the public is much better off in the hands of the clique than in the hands of the clique.

For one thing, the members of the clique have a history, traditions, even codes of behavior on their side, as Hector Berlioz wrote in his inimitable fashion nearly 125 years ago. His handbook of manners and customs as it applied to the claqueurs of the Paris Opéra may be found in his *Evenings with the Orchestra*, under the title “*De viris illustribus urbis Romæ*.” (The reference is to Nero as the first known employer of hired applause, hence to all those of the profession as Romans.) Grand strategy and the tactics for effecting it are analyzed with as much care for detail as Berlioz applied to his other famous pioneering study, the *Traité de l'instrumentation*. I do not doubt that an aspiring composer can still learn much from the treatise on instrumentation; the ambitious claqueur will find out all he needs to know about the niceties of applause from *Evenings with the Orchestra*.

Instrumentation has changed, even as operas have, but performers have changed hardly at all. The ends of claquing, when expertly done, remain the same—to provide guidance, through example, to the impressionable members of the audience, the ticket-buyers. Left to themselves, the members of the audience might respond only to those things to which they had an instinctive, pleasurable reaction. In such circumstances, a whole evening might pass with nothing more than a polite patter of hands, with never a “bravo.” Not only would the performers feel let down by this lack of attention; the public itself would likely conclude that it had witnessed a rather tepid affair. In such wise does the experienced clique render a service beyond the call of duty.

The clique, however—which is not paid, but pays—is of more recent, indeterminate origin. As it does its work largely from sheer enthusiasm, it adds, to the several other vocations noted by the late Alexander Woolcott, one more profession ruined by amateurs. I should not be surprised if Jean de Reszke was one of the first performers to inspire a clique, for why else should a cigarette have been sold with his name on it? Certainly it was in full flower by 1920, when the late W. J. Henderson described the followers of Geraldine Farrar as “gerryflappers” in these words:

“All the little gerryflappers were out last night [a performance of Leoncavallo’s *Zaza*] striving to fill the Metropolitan Opera House with their hysterical squeaks of rapturous approval of everything done by the prima donna, even that of which, it is to be hoped, they did not know the meaning. What is a gerryflapper? Simply a girl about the flapper age who has created in her own half baked mind a goddess which she names Geraldine Farrar.” Somewhat unpredictably, the gerryflappers seized upon the name with glee. When Farrar retired from opera a few years later, her props and costumes were distributed among the ranking gerryflappers according to seniority.

Some of them attached themselves to Lucrezia Bori, but not enough to make a resounding clique. Moreover, like Farrar she had plentiful general favor, and did not require more. I next noted such manifestations on behalf of Marion Talley (only when friends from Kansas City were numerous enough to make an effect) and Grace Moore. The latter began with a special clique, composed of Broadwayites, Algonquinians, and well-wishers descended from Tennessee. She later acquired a coterie of young people to whose mind her status was that which Henderson assigned to the gerryflap-

pers' notion of Farrar. Her death in a plane crash transferred the loyalty, if only temporarily, to her protégée Dorothy Kirsten. Real cliques, since, have worked passionately on behalf of Risë Stevens and, most recently, Renata Tebaldi.

The distinction between clique and claque was sharply revealed to me on an occasion when Miss Kirsten undertook some prominent assignment at the Metropolitan for the first time. At the end of Act I, her appearance before the curtain brought forth, from a covey of youngsters behind the rail, the same "hysterical squeaks" noted on behalf of Farrar by Henderson. But, at the same moment, a bouquet of flowers arched up from a front row seat (in defiance of a house rule of long standing) to be gathered in by the "surprised" Miss Kirsten. My eye traveled to the place occupied by her manager, and my mind had no difficulty explaining what had been bulging under his overcoat when I passed him in the corridor before the performance. His maneuver fitted precisely Berlioz's definition of the professional *claqueur*—one who is "educated, shrewd, cautious, inspired."

The reference to the end of Act I dates the Kirsten incident as prior to the period of Rudolf Bing's direction, for solo curtain calls are now taboo, his intention having been to prevent unseemly demonstrations for one performer while the others sulked in the wings. The purpose was laudable, but the consequences have been otherwise. Both the clique and the claque have allowed Bing to stand his ground, meanwhile outflanking him, right and left, by a pincer's thrust into the heart of the performance itself, where every aria, arietta, or, merely, entrance provides an excuse for ear-shattering applause.

Plainly applause follows the natural law of water by seeking its own level. Dam it up at one point, and it will spill out and

over the barrier someplace else. Unfortunately the impartial audience does not have the same choice. It might well spill out at the ends of the acts and leave the various factions to their frenzies, but it has no choice in mid-act save to cower in its seats and wait until the noises subside. A resolute conductor can do much, as Dimitri Mitropoulos showed when he stilled the applause for Renata Tebaldi's entrance in a recent *Tosca* by turning to the audience full face as he continued to beat time. The clear implication was that while the applause continued, the performance would also—inadvisably. The clique took the hint and subsided. Similar strength of character can limit the applause after an aria to its legitimate quota (an experienced ear can easily detect the point of false perpetuation) with a downbeat for the orchestra. However, when the performer has the first word in an unaccompanied recitative *after* the aria, the conductor is in a trap of the composer's making.

The enthusiasm of the clique is often self-defeating, for rather than being "educated, shrewd, cautious," etc., it is ignorant, uneconomical, and indiscriminate. I do not mean ignorant of musical values, in which it is no more culpable than the claque; rather, it is ignorant of the niceties of the calling. Effort is wasted by applauding or calling out at the time when the general public is responsive. Hence the stimulus that proper disposition of applause can provide is dissipated. I recall an occasion when a hoarse young man rewarded two of his favorites in a performance of *Don Giovanni* by calling: "Bravo Pinza! Bravo Baccaloni!" A skilled claqueur with a mind to accomplishing similar ends would have crowded twice as many salvos into the same length of time by contracting it to "Bravo Pinzaloni!"

It is a point worth noting that the classic terminologies

internationally applied to cliquing as well as claquing are derived from Italian ("bravo," "bravissimo," "bis," and the rarely heard anti-claquism "basta," ["enough"]), as the classic words of military terminology ("rendezvous," "veille," "cadre," "reconnoître," "bivouac," etc.) are derived from French. Much as the disciples of Napoleon evolved a language to deal with the physical battlefield, so the disciples of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi provided us with the jargon of the operatic battlefield.

As might be expected, the clique does acquire polish and refinement by contact with the clique. It shouts a better brand of Italian than the standees did when I circulated among them, rarely committing the solecism of a "bravo" when a feminine ending is in order. "Bis" is seldom heard at the Metropolitan, as repetitions have been emphatically forbidden since the time when Chaliapin stepped out of his role of King Philip II in *Don Carlo*, walked to the footlights and told the conductor (Papi) where to begin again in "*Ella giammai m'amò*." (I recently noted the report of a *Lucia* at the Stoll Theatre in London in which both the Sextet and the Mad Scene were repeated.)

In a spirit of amateurism, the cliqueurs have also taken to amusing themselves by applauding obscure performers at certain pointers to which only they would be sensitive. I refer to the tenor who sings "*Di rigori armato*" in the first act of *Rosenkavalier* or the basso who carries Sparafucile's low F off stage in Act II of *Rigoletto*. Somewhere, in some theater, a tenor sang the air so brilliantly or the basso sounded his F so sonorously that a spontaneous reaction ensued. An occupational tradition thus evolved. Now, lest the poor devil feel cheated by a total silence, there is always some amateur of the craft to give him a token splash or two, even if the

audience remains indifferent. Likewise, the singer of Ortrud, when she invokes the pagan gods in the second act of *Lohengrin*: "*Entweihte Götter! Helft jetzt meiner Rachel!*" Perhaps Schumann-Heink or Matzenauer once curdled the blood in a way to cause an audience to forget its Wagnerian manners, but every Ortrud now expects some response, if only from a clique of one—her husband.

Sometimes one can gauge the inexperience of a singer from the inexperience of the clique that appears, say, when a new Gilda makes her debut in *Rigoletto*. It is a rarity for one to get through "*Caro nome*" without being falsely applauded before the final measures, like a juggler who has completed only half a trick. In such circumstances an audience may be expected to form itself into a formidable anti-clique and shush the offending minority into silence. A somewhat similar impulse shows itself when novice Wagnerians offer applause at the first-act curtain of *Parsifal* and an angry murmur quiets those who do not know that *Parsifal* is not meant to be enjoyed.

Is it possible for any individual, however determined, to offset the effects of applause, to turn the tide of battle single-handed, to become, in effect, an anti-claque? I have never heard of such an occurrence in the opera house, but Artur Rubinstein tells of an occasion when he performed in London before a hall full of enthusiasts, including his friend Lady Asquith. He had, he felt, performed quite well, and was mentally framing a sequence of encores as he plunged into his final programed work, a march by Prokofiev. His distraction was such that he struck the first cord in F sharp rather than F minor, and had to transpose through the duration of the piece. However, it came off brilliantly, to a satisfactory burst of applause. After a bow or two, Rubinstein

retired to straighten his tie and prepare for a first encore. As he returned to the stage, he noticed the audience filing out. Perplexed, he said to the attendant: "What happened? Didn't they like it?" "Oh, yes," said the attendant, "but after your second bow, Lady Asquith stood up, silenced the crowd with a gesture and said: 'Mr. Rubinstein has played quite enough for one evening.'"

♦ ALTO RHAPSODY

NAPOLEON knowingly remarked that every corporal carries a marshal's baton in his knapsack. Bülow referred to a tenor not as a man, but as a disease. So far, however, nobody has paid to the low voice that is supposed to be an excellent thing in woman any compliment more notable than writing endless quantities of beautiful music for it to sing.

I have observed the species for some time, more in anguish than in anger; it seems to me that the problem is basically simple. Combine the dicta of Napoleon and Bülow and you make considerable progress toward an understanding. The baton that every such singer carries in her knapsack is *Carmen*, and if being a tenor is a form of ailment, what about a vocalist who is not even sure when she wakes of a morning whether to call herself an alto, a contralto, or, equivocally, a mezzo-soprano?

Indeed, the confusion often extends to billing the same singer now as a mezzo, now as a contralto, according to degree of prominence and the fee she commands. Marian Anderson, for example, is widely regarded as a "contralto" because her low tones had—in her prime—a deeper hue than those of her mezzo sisters, though she habitually sang the same repertory as those who call themselves (more accurately) mezzo-sopranos. On the other hand, Jennie Tourel took credit for being a "mezzo" who could also sing in the soprano register, though she was—by vocal type—a low soprano rather than a true mezzo. Finally, consider the case of

Helen Traubel, who could have been a superb Brangäne or Fricka or Ortrud (in *Lohengrin*) when her top notes began to go, but apparently could not make the necessary mental adjustment.

For to be a mezzo is as much a state of mind as it is a condition of voice. The importance of *Carmen* in her scheme of things is not limited solely to its obvious attractions in colorful music, the opportunity to dance and wear a series of attractive costumes, to have, altogether, a high old time. It is also concerned with the whole course of the opera, in which *Carmen* charms one man in the first act and holds him securely to the end, turns down another (Zuniga) in Act II, and adds a third (Escamillo) to her string for Act IV. She is such an irresistible creature that Don José pays her the compliment of assassination when she has made it quite clear that, as far as she is concerned, his usefulness is at an end.

But when she is not singing *Carmen*, a mezzo's lot is scarcely happier than Sergeant Willis's. Amneris wears nice clothes and has a rich entourage of servants, but even the dowry for marrying a king's daughter cannot affect Radames's preference for her servant Aïda. Dalila achieved a historic conquest, but only by the use of trickery. As for the other standard occupation of those singers once described by Ernest Newman as messy sopranos, they range from the drab nurse part in *Roméo* to the blind woman in *Gioconda*; from the scorned wife of Herod in *Salome* (*Hérodias*) to the scorned wife of Wotan in *Walküre* (Fricka); from the gypsy hag Azucena in *Trovatore* to the hardly more attractive caricature in *Nozze di Figaro* called Marcellina. One of the best performers I have seen of Azucena was Cloe Elmo, the abbreviated Italian whose size belied her vocal power. On the occasion when she followed it at the Metropolitan with

an equally fine Ulrica in *Ballo in Maschera*, I expressed my enthusiasm to the experienced impresario S. Hurok. He cautioned: "Wait until you hear her in something beside these witch parts." His admonition proved well considered when she foundered while attempting Santuzza in *Cavalleria*, which can be sung by a soprano such as Calvé (who went down to the range of Carmen), but is questionable daring for a true mezzo. But Elmo's Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, with its savorous, malicious "Reverenza" will be long remembered. Given a season in which an opera company was doing *Trovatore*, *Ballo*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, and *Gioconda*, an Elmo could make a considerable reputation singing nothing but hags.

If a mezzo has any tendency at all toward an inferiority complex, life on the stage is likely to be a hard row for her to hoe. If she is good-looking and slender, what does the management do? It decides that she is ideal for—of all things—the pseudomale roles. They begin by putting her into the tights of Siébel in *Faust*, then into the childish pantaloons of Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and (if she survives this crisis) into the binding garb of Cherubino in *Figaro*. When she has mastered the art of masquerading as a member of the opposite sex, she can look forward to being rewarded with the dual character of Octavian. Here she has to act not only the part of a man (as played by a woman), but also the part of a man acting the part of a servant girl (that is, a woman impersonating a man impersonating a woman). It is, on the whole, rather surprising that nobody has made an opera of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, if only to provide a mezzo with another opportunity to play a male disguised as a woman.

To be sure, if she is really a great mezzo, with a fine robust

voice and a command of classic style, the management may pay her the compliment of reviving Gluck's *Orfeo*. In this she is the center of attention, with some of the most beautiful music ever written to sing. She can, in fact, have quite a good time if she does not brood inordinately because *Orfeo*, too, is a man.

Those who have pondered the absence of a Mozart literature for the mezzo-soprano might accuse the great master, otherwise so embracing in his musical sympathies, of an unreasoning prejudice against the deeper female voice. With the exception of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (and the borderline Cherubino in *Figaro*), the mezzo who dotes on Mozart will either have to forego his stage literature or settle for such character parts as Marcellina in *Figaro*, one of the brothers in *Titus*, the *dritte Dame* in *Die Zauberflöte*, or something equally obscure.

The simple fact is, however, that the classification of voices to which we are now accustomed did not become a convention until after Mozart's time. There was, for one thing, the *castrato* to take the lower register we now associated with the mezzo (the convention of Gluck, and before him of Handel, Purcell, and Alessandro Scarlatti). For another, female singers were expected to be much more versatile than they have gradually become—as sopranos who have struggled with the intricacies of Constanze's music in *Die Entführung* or Ilia's in *Idomeneo* will readily attest.

One may doubt, indeed, that a classification of female voices in terms of range ever occurred to Mozart. Writing to his father about an operatic project in 1783 for which the libretto was to be provided by the Abbate Varesco, the poet of *Idomeneo*, Mozart suggests: "The most essential thing is that on the whole the story should be really comic: and if

possible he ought to introduce two equally good female parts, one of these to be *seria*, the other *mezzo carattere*, but both parts equal in *importance and excellence*. The third female character, however, may be entirely *buffa* and so may all the male ones, if necessary. If you think that something can be got out of Varesco, please discuss it with him soon."

Simple proof of this may be found in the scores themselves, whether *Figaro*, *Così*, *Zauberflöte*, or *Don Giovanni*. In all of these, the female roles are uniformly labeled "Soprano" (if in Italian) or "Sopran" (when in German), including such roles as Cherubino, Dorabella, and the three ladies in *Zauberflöte*. None of Weber's celebrated scores shows a leading mezzo part (Eglantine in *Euryanthe* and Fatima in *Oberon* are now commonly assigned to a mezzo); and a glance at Bellini's *Norma*, from the 1830's, shows that the role of Adalgisa, which mezzos covet as their very own, was also written for the general order of voice called soprano.

Wagner does not seem to have had much use for the later subdivision until he came to the *Ring*. Ortrud, Venus, Brangäne, and Magdalene in *Meistersinger* are all soprano parts in the composer's estimation, though the Wagnerian mezzo of today would find life dull without them. It is only with the Brünnhildes, with Fricka and Waltraute, that a new terminology appears in the text: "*Hoher Sopran*" for the former, "*Tiefer Sopran*" for the others. By this time Wagner had advanced to subdividing horns and tubas into the mixture called the tenor *Tuben* (the so-called Bayreuth *Tuben*), and was understandably more precise in his requirements for the human instruments.

However, it would be unwise to attribute the innovation to Wagner, for where would that leave all the Verdian roles on

which mezzos dote? The father, in fact, appears to be Rosini, whose *Tancredi* of 1813 requires a contralto "hero" in place of the no-longer-available castrato. For the lighter female conceptions of Rosina in *Il Barbiere* and Cenerentola in *La Cenerentola*, something more agile than the true contralto was desired, and so the mezzo-soprano came into being. Two of the greatest were Malibran and Pasta: but as the former sang Leonore in *Fidelio* (also Zerlina) and the latter was the first Norma, it can be readily recognized that neither conformed to what we think of now as a mezzo-soprano.

Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* of 1836 describes Urbain as a mezzo (though her "Nobles seigneurs, salut!" calls for a two-octave range up to a high C). Donizetti's *Favorita* of 1840 notes Leonora di Guzman as a soprano, though her "O mio Fernando" is a mezzo delight today. The indication would be that what was possible for such an exceptional singer as Malibran or Pasta was impossible for a more limited singer unless she specialized in it.

Verdi's very first opera (the almost forgotten *Oberto, Conte di Bonifacio* of 1839) includes a mezzo-soprano in the important role of Cuniza, and his succeeding twenty-five works are seldom without one. The clear evidence is that he valued the additional vocal range in the tonal resources of the stage, utilizing it to sharpen dramatic characterization. Once the conception had been planted in Verdi's mind, he nurtured it carefully to produce such varied roles as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Azucena in *Trovatore*, Preziosilla in *Forza, Amneris*, Eboli, Ulrica, Emilia in *Otello*, and Quickly in *Falstaff*.

As is well known, the suitability of a part for a voice is not determined by an occasional, or even an isolated, note at one extreme or the other, but by its prevailing range, or *tessitura*.

Verdi evolved both a dramatic and a vocal character for the mezzo which defined the previous exceptions as a new type. It was not long before it insinuated itself into the thinking of subsequent composers of opera in Italy and abroad.

On the other hand, it was Wagner who most acutely characterized the mezzo in the words that Wotan pronounces as Fricka approaches in the second act of *Walküre*—"Der alte Sturm! Die alte Müh!" which comes close enough to the colloquial to be rendered as "the old storm and strife." Who else but a present-day mezzo would be asked to stand still through the whole act of an opera without singing more than a few lines in an ensemble, as Ortrud must in the first act of *Lohengrin*? And when she makes herself available to impersonate Venus, the Goddess of Love, in *Tannhäuser* what happens? He has had enough of her before the first act is ended, and begs to be excused.

So, the next time you see a mezzo struggling manfully with Cherubino or Orfeo, or womanfully with Adalgisa or Dora-bella, remember that she has usurped not only her identity, but also her occupation and role. One might charitably recall the words of Captain Philip at the battle of Santiago Bay: "Don't cheer, boys, the poor devils are dying," and say: "Don't sneer, boys, the poor dear is dying for her next opportunity to sing Carmen!"

♦ THE VOCAL THUMBPRINT

SITTING in a concert hall or opera house as often as a critic must sit there, I have frequently been struck by a curious fact: nobody, really, can tell how anybody else in the same gathering is hearing the performance to which I am listening—or whether we are actually sharing the same experience. The basic distinction between “hearing” and “listening” on many occasions separates a major part of the audience—which is hearing, passively—from the minor part, which is listening, actively.

To be sure, there are occasions when a fundamental kind of experience determines a mass reaction: if something is very bad, in the sense of being dull, or when something is very good, in the sense of being exciting. But this formulation is also vulnerable: an unsophisticated hearer could find dull something that a sophisticated listener might find exciting, and a provocative experience for the former might strike the latter as merely irritating. Tchaikovsky expressed something of this perplexity in a letter to Mme von Meck, apropos Mozart, when he sighed, reflectively: “Ah, how difficult it is to make anyone else see and feel in music what we see and feel ourselves!”

Generally speaking, musicians will hear music with more uniformity of reaction than a miscellany of cultivated music-lovers or those who just “like” music. I have rarely been more acutely aware of this gap than on the occasion a few years ago when a recording of *Un Ballo in Maschera* was issued with such Italian celebrities as Gina Cigna, Galliano Masini, and

Ebe Stignani each assigned to a plausible role in the printed cast. I have often wondered how I would have reacted had I not been alerted by a correspondent otherwise unknown to me that there was something "peculiar" about the sound of this recording. Thus on guard, I had no difficulty in identifying the tenor as Jan Peerce, the baritone as Leonard Warren, and the others of the cast as celebrities of a Metropolitan broadcast. The pirated tape had been converted into a mislabeled recording on the blissful assumption that the names would be convincing of themselves, that "nobody would know the difference."

To proceed from the apparent to the recondite in assembling evidence to prove what had been done was an education in musical values. In the period of Metropolitan activity involved, two possible performances of *Ballo* might have provided the source material. To spice the challenge, Jan Peerce, Leonard Warren, and Margaret Harshaw had performed on both occasions. The soprano was obviously not Zinka Milanov, which eliminated a Saturday matinee of 1945 in which she had participated. Whether it was the Yugoslav Daniza Ilitsch, who sang Amelia at a broadcast performance of November 7, 1947, was more difficult to say. Her career in America was brief, she was not familiar as a recording artist, and her vocal character was imperfectly established.

A listening session was arranged with several members of the Metropolitan staff, among them Max Rudolf, who not only has a conductor's ear, but also has dealt with casting. Having confirmed the obvious, Rudolf studied the two casts for a moment, and then said: "Let us listen to the portion of Act One in which the Judge sings." Perplexed by this apparent aberration, the person at the turntable eventually located the right groove, with a tenor singing the words: "*Ulrica*

—*dell'immondo sangue de' negri.*" "That makes it this one for sure," he said, pointing to the cast of the November 7, 1947. "That is Chabay singing the Judge. Nobody else sings Italian like a Hungarian."

The experience made me aware that there is, without doubt, what might be described as a "vocal thumbprint"—a set of audible characteristics which, if one were familiar enough with them, would enable the ear to recognize a voice with almost the certainty with which the eye can match the patterns and whorls to a master fingerprint. The only difference would be, of course, that the vocal sound would not remain absolutely constant from youth to maturity to old age, as the fingerprint does. Nevertheless, despite deviations, variations, and alterations, the McCormack of 1908 and the McCormack of 1928, the Caruso of 1903 and the Caruso of 1920, are definitely McCormack and Caruso at all times.

Assuming that one would not confuse McCormack's "*Che gelida manina*" with Caruso's, is there any reason why one should confuse Bjoerling's with Di Stefano's? There is the element of personality, certainly, and the fact that we have been listening to the older singers (from records) for years longer than we have known the younger ones. But it is basically a matter of familiarity with the sound, of sufficient exposure to it, for a mental image of its components to be formed and filed away in a recess of the mind from which it can be summoned at will. The same people who regarded my positive conviction about Peerce in *Ballo* as a form of black magic or some occult penetration of an obscure mystery would not, could not, possibly confuse a Barrymore reading Shakespeare with Olivier or Gielgud or Evans, or Harry S. Truman taking the Presidential inaugural oath with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. All the more reason, then, for a voice

subject to cultivation and training to acquire specific characteristics of its own, and all the more mystery why it should be considered mysterious for a trained ear to recognize what a trained voice is doing.

For, often enough, in addition to such basic matters as timbre, overtones, vibrato, intonation, and the rest, a vocal character derives from the singer's intellectual processes—or the lack of them. When one note is joined to others to form a phrase, one phrase to the next to make a musical period (the equivalent of a written sentence), and all the periods of the aria or song are linked, you have a substantial index to the taste, judgment, and experience of the performer, as well as to his sound. Even when a singer is called upon to disguise the basic vocal sound for a dramatic purpose—as Despina in *Così* when she impersonates “*il medico*” or Gianni Schicchi in Puccini's comedy when he imitates the deceased Buoso Donati—something of the basic vocal personality will persist, whether it is merely a matter of breathing, of the ascent to a top tone, or the preparation of an attack by a slight scoop from below. Every singer playing the part is required to do the same thing, but every artist will do it in a way minutely but perceptibly different from every other. The sum of these variations comprises what I call the vocal thumbprint.

It is a sum, moreover, to which might be added ever more detail, depending on the acuteness of the listening ear. I had a revealing experience with high proficiency some years ago when the guests at a social evening included Frank St. Leger, for many years right hand to Edward Johnson in the direction of the Metropolitan, a man with a vast expanse of musical, mainly operatic, experience. One thing led to another, and finally to the game of recognizing singers from recordings. Common puzzles were of no avail with a man of St. Leger's

ear and experience, wherefore the challenge took the form of parts not usually associated with a particular singer, or an unsuspected language, or other circumstances that might throw intellectual dust in the listening ear.

I thought I had a good formula for bafflement in several sopranos singing "*Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante*," Micaëla's third-act aria in *Carmen*. To keep the game alive for the other listeners, I asked St. Leger to keep his opinions to himself until the sequence was finished. (There were, as I recall, an assortment including Licia Albanese, Eleanor Steber, Elisabeth Rethberg, Grace Moore, perhaps, and one or two others.) He listened with interest, making noises of satisfaction when a telltale detail fastened a name to a note, grunting in recollection of a particular singer's phrasing, etc. Given the go-ahead, he said confidently: "The first was Albanese, the second was Steber, the third was Rethberg, and the fourth sounded like Steber again." "Oh, no," I said, "you're right for the first three, but you're way off on number four." "Let's have it again," he said. I slipped the fourth record out of the stack—it was recognizable by a distinctive label color—put it on again, and listened with him. "It's got to be Steber," he said. "Listen to how she opens up on that phrase," mimicking the mouth action involved, "then closes down again." I was really enjoying my joke, and stopped the machine to show proof of his error.

The error, of course, was mine, and the joke was his.

It was Steber, on a duplicate of the record included as number two in the sequence. One, issued in America, had the usual Red Seal, the other, the red label of English H.M.V. My intention had been to include a disk by another singer, also with the English red label, but the inadvertent duplication taught me a good deal about the vocal thumbprint—

the man who knows and knows why he knows will not be easily persuaded to disbelieve what he hears.

Does the existence of a vocal thumbprint or the faculty for recognizing it add to anything more than matter for a parlor game or innocent diversion in the opera house when time has not permitted close inspection of a program and one seeks to identify the performers merely from the way they sound? It does, I think, help us recognize the constituents of vocal art, especially, as sometimes happens, when a reasonable amount of familiarity with a voice still leaves its character elusive.

I think, in this connection, of two singers of the present day, both of high rank in their specialties. For a long time I could not "fix," mentally, the sound of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, bring it to mind clearly, as I could say, the sounds of Lotte Lehmann or Elisabeth Schumann (to mention two paragons in the literature Miss Schwarzkopf has made hers, too). After a considerable listening experience, the thought emerged that there was no fixed Schwarzkopf character, that it varied from one operatic part, or one kind of song, to another and many times had a suspicious resemblance to such a predecessor as Lehmann or Schumann. There is nothing inartistic or unethical in this—some might merely call it overscholarly—but it suggested to me that much of her "recreation" was a kind of ventriloquism. (When she sings Bach, for which she has a real feeling, something like a definitely Schwarzkopf character can be heard.)

The other example, of a rather different sort, is that of Victoria de los Angeles. A refined singer, with a high degree of artistic conscience and no conspicuously bad vocal habits, Miss de Los Angeles is the counterpart, in her singing personality, of the neutral, impassive figure she presents dra-

matically. Whether it is Manon, Butterfly, Eva, or the Countess in *Figaro*, her posture, gesture, and movements are very much the same. Likewise the sound—a good sound, a clean sound, often a beautiful sound, but an oddly impersonal, indescribable one. I have come to this conclusion finally: if an unidentified record or broadcast tantalizes me with something very well sung by somebody who doesn't sound like anybody else—least of all, herself—it is very likely Los Angeles.

These formulations are tentative and exploratory, though they may serve as basis for a study of the ways by which voices might be described and classified. Certainly there has never been so much research material with which to work as we have in the hundreds of recorded operas, with their dozen of duplications. What we need, perhaps, is such a man as the nineteenth-century English critic Henry F. Chorley, who compiled a recollection of thirty years' listening experience in England and developed his technique of description to characterize one Donna Elvira (a Mademoiselle Lowe) in terms of the "quill-tone" in her "harpsichord quality of voice." He perhaps, could formulate a vocabulary going beyond the French *voix blanche*, or *voix d'or*, or the Italian *spinto*, or the German *Jugendlichdramatischsopran*—which, after all, are types—to something individual and specific. It is all very well to say that Francesco Tamagno had a trumpet quality in his voice, but we know that the trumpet as played by Harry Glantz has one sound, and the trumpet as played by Harry James has another.

What, I think, might emerge from such a study is a classification of singers in terms of the clarity of the vocal thumbprint, the recognition factor in the voice qua voice. McCormack and Caruso delight later generations through the indi-

viduality and immediacy of the personalities their voices communicate; so with Muzio and Ruffo, Ponselle and Rethberg—whether or not they were the best singers of their time, or the finest artists.

As the style is the man, so the voice is the singer. The earmarks of the fine ones are preserved, always, in the thumbprints they leave behind.

♦ ENDS AND CLIMAXES

AS ALL Wagnerites, perfect or otherwise are aware, there is a point midway in *Die Walküre* at which Wotan, sorely beset, rises to his feet and dramatically declaims: "Das Ende! Das Ende!" This had to do, of course, with a purely personal problem of the moment which troubles him no little, but it puts a proper emphasis on a phase of operatic craftsmanship in which Wagner regularly, systematically, excelled virtually any nineteenth-century creator with a comparable production. That is to say: how to achieve an end, which is also a climax.

Casting about the operatic landscape the eye falls on such makeshifts as the last act of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, a mere sixteen-minute pendant to a situation mostly exhausted, or the more elaborate concluding scene of Verdi's *Falstaff*, which is virtually a repetition of Falstaff's unmasking in Act II, though in a different costume and a different setting. As to the works of the lesser operatic minds, the probability is of more misses than hits. Massenet, who was so adroit at other things, never really mastered the art: Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, which has a little of everything in it, can never come to grips with its resolution, and Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* settles for a suggestion of multiple off-stage guillotining for its conclusion.

Among Wagner's mature works (with the possible exception of *Parsifal*, which is a special case), there is hardly one a listener can leave before the end without missing what is close to the best music in the score—certainly not

inferior to anything that has gone before. In *Rheingold* it is the dazzling "Entry of the Gods into Valhalla"; in *Walküre* the eloquent "Wotan's Farewell" and "Magic Fire Music"; in *Siegfried* the ever-widening circles of the Love Duet of Siegfried and Brünnhilde; in *Götterdämmerung* the Immolation Scene capped by the music in which Wotan's world tumbles around him.

The last of these is a sumptuous instance of the Wagnerian abundance in full tide. The composer having accomplished the "Funeral Music" that accompanies the mournful march with Siegfried's body back to the hall of the Gibichungs, it would seem the limit of mortal man's capacity to have Brünnhilde pronounce a few measures of grief, then expire. But the challenge to Wagner was to resolve her previous doubts of Siegfried, now that it has become apparent that he was a victim of treachery. Adding to her monumental panegyric the marvelous page in which the whole of the cycle is summed up as the Ring is returned to the Rhine Maidens amid Valhalla's tottering splendor is certainly the essence of genius.

But the tonal piling of Pelion on Ossa was fairly routine for Wagner. Tristan's ravings and the excitement of Isolde's arrival would have sufficed as a third act for almost any other operatic composer known to us. Adding the "Liebestod" shows the capacity that leaves one close to breathless. Even the retirement of Lohengrin, decrescendo though it is, has its high spot in the "Grail Narrative," in which the question with which Elsa has been plaguing him all night is finally answered.

Wagner was perhaps the most voluble of all composers, and he has left ample written indications that this was the product neither of accident nor intuition, but of considerable

hard thinking. In the original draft of the *Nibelungen* saga (written early in the 1850's), Hunding survives the action of what is now the second act of *Walküre*, prowling the forests for years. When Siegfried is grown to manhood and forges the sword, he sets out in search of his father's killer before attending to the more urgent business of finding the dragon. It adds immensely to the strength of the second-act climax of *Walküre* for much of this to be combined in a single tableau. Having fulfilled his obligation to Fricka, Wotan rewards Hunding with the contemptuous "Geh!" and a wave of the hand, at which he falls dead. It also keeps Hunding in the frame of the incidents that involve him, and relieves *Siegfried* of a character who might have cluttered its action.

Perhaps the most impressive accomplishment of Wagner in the art of arranging ends that are also climaxes is in a work commonly termed a "comedy," hence "lighter" than the tragedies. I am by no means agreed that comedy involves a lower order of talent than tragedy, especially when they are the expression of the same individual. In my view, *Die Meistersinger* shows Wagner's formidable skills at their most resourceful, his sense of musical proportion and dramatic integration as closely knit and evenly balanced as ever a multiple-minded genius achieved.

As expert witness for the defense, I call upon his great contemporary of the Italian scene, Arrigo Boïto, who knew the problem from both sides, as librettist and composer. If his endowment was by no means as even as Wagner's, his "book" for *Otello* is one of the finest accomplishments of its kind, his text for *Falstaff* the comic-opera opportunity for which Verdi had yearned all his life. Replying to a com-

plaint from Verdi about his third act (to which previous reference had been made), Boïto wrote in a letter of 1889:

No doubt about it—the third act is rather chilly: a pity. Unfortunately that is the law of the comic theater: in tragedy it is the opposite that happens. Getting closer to the final catastrophe (either foreseen as in *Otello* or unforeseen as in *Hamlet*) the interest grows enormously as the end is terrible. Hence the final acts of tragedies are the most beautiful. In comedy all that happens is that the knot will be untied, and the interest wanes, as the end is happy. You have recently read Goldoni, and you must remember how in his last scenes, in spite of the marvels of the dialogue and of the character-drawing, the action loses impetus and the interest grows cold. In spite of his immense powers, Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has not been able to escape the common law. It is so with Molière, with Beaumarchais and Rossini. The last scene of the *Barber* always seems to me less admirable than the rest. You will correct me if I am in error. In comedy a point is reached when the audience says: "It is over"; but on the stage all is not over yet.

Continuing, Boïto says:

It is impossible to untie a knot without slowing down the pace, and when that happens the end becomes a foregone conclusion: the interest is gone before the knot is unraveled. *The knot is untied in comedy: it is broken or cut in tragedy.* [My italics. I. K.] Hence the third act of *Falstaff* is rather cold. But as the law is common to all comedy, the mischief is not as serious as it appears to be. . . .

He then goes on to mention the "unexpected fantastic atmosphere" of the third act, "which may help," and the various turns of the plot.

Perhaps if Wagner had followed his original inclinations

in the plan of *Die Meistersinger*, it too would have had a "rather chilly" conclusion. In an interesting book devoted wholly to the conception and execution of *Meistersinger* (an Oxford University Press publication of 1940), Robert M. Rayner cites the first prose draft of 1845, which Wagner wrote in Marienbad after reading widely in the background of the mastersingers of the sixteenth century. It was, in a way, meant to be a comic counterpart to the serious portrayal of the minnesingers in *Tannhäuser*. How it would develop, Wagner of course could not foresee.

In essence the first draft is a close projection of the story as it eventually came to be. There is, in the Boïtoesque sense, a "knot," and it is untied. But the references to Sachs describe him as he reads the rules of the guild (an action afterwards assigned to Kothner) "with an admixture of irony. . . . He speaks sharply to the young man, so that the latter is somewhat anxious and embarrassed." In the workshop scene of Act III, Sachs's advice to the Knight (later Walther von Stolzing) is "return to your castle," although he assures him that somehow he will win the bride (Eva) he desires. When that occurs later in Act III, and the Knight rejects membership in the guild, Sachs admonishes him, Wagner writes, "half in earnest, half ironically." Then, reads the script, "the bridal procession is quickly formed. Sachs leads the bride, and the procession, led by pipers, goes toward the city."

With all his self-assurance, Wagner had an instinctive awareness that this subject—for all its clear detail in his mind—was not yet for him. *Lohengrin* replaced it as the "work in hand," followed by a half-dozen years in which he wrote no music, struggling to promote an income from the works he had left behind in Germany when forced into

exile, writing enormous quantities of prose. The plan of the Ring was evolved, partially carried out (to midway through Siegfried), and put aside for work on the more "practicable" *Tristan*. This, in turn, was completed and put aside—"practicable" as its scenic demands were, the music had taken turns into musical byways previously untraveled—in favor, finally, of the *Meistersinger* project of seventeen years before.

In the reconsideration launched in 1862, with much further research into the historical guilds, Wagner made one profound change. It was, of course, in the person of Sachs, whose mood had mellowed, even as had the mood of the composer, who had told his friends in 1850 that *Die Meistersinger* was out of the question because he was "too full of bitterness" with his experiences in Dresden to do it justice. Not that he had been warmed by worldly success—*Lohengrin* was still his last work to have reached the stage. But he knew the worth of *Walküre* and *Tristan*, and could casually sign his correspondence "Meister" without his friends considering it an affectation.

As it now took shape—and the music more than once coursed into channels that the dramatic scheme could only barely anticipate, and sometimes had to follow—a remarkable thing began to happen. *Die Meistersinger* remained a comedy, but a comedy played on several levels simultaneously. Rather than being a mere spoof of rule-bound authority resisting the onset of change, it became transformed into an age-old conflict of the impetuous young head and the wiser, but still resilient, older one. In the end, there is nothing "half in earnest, half ironical" about Sachs's "*Verachtet mir die Meister nicht*," which marks the true climax of the whole opera, as well as of the third

act. We do not have to rise to our feet in tribute to "deutsche Kunst," as custom decrees in Bayreuth, but one can well stand up to recognize the artifice by which the comic "knot" has been given a profound twist before it is finally unraveled.

In this example of "Das Ende!" what shines forth clearly is the way the indeterminate emphasis, now here, now there, is finally focused squarely on Sachs. It is by no means inherent in the situation as Wagner sketched it at first. But, it becomes increasingly apparent, a comedy conceived on the easy superficial relationship among the masters and the interloper has developed into something more profound—in which comedy is a phase of the whole, but truth is the whole.

Something of the same recognition came upon Strauss and Hofmannsthal when they were working on *Der Rosenkavalier*. The original scheme involved an "appetizing wench in pants ("à la Mary Garden"), a buffoon Ochs, and nothing much more. Had the ingredients remained as plotted, the third act might have represented as unwieldy an untying of the knot as Boïto deplored in *Falstaff*. But the collaborators had the wit to return the Marschallin to the scene half-way through Act III, enabling Strauss to write the exalted trio and sustain by means of the strong, central, serious character she presents, the interest through the resolution of the difficulties involving Octavian and Sophie. The moral to aspiring librettists, it would seem, is: he laughs last who has the final tear.

The example of Wagner would indicate that operatic success requires not only a patient pursuit of the good, but also an equally impatient rejection of the bad. The tortuous process by which the *Ring* was constructed (*Siegfried* to

explain *Götterdämmerung*, *Walküre* to explain *Siegfried*, and so on) often leaves us becalmed on a sea of verbal explanation. But when the wind of musical impulse is blowing, the progress to the destination is swift and sure. When Wagner was functioning fully as musician and dramatist, his guiding thought, plainly, was that the "ends" must justify the means, for without them there could be no real climax, hence no durable interest.

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♦ ♦ ♦ *COMPOSERS AND COMPOSITIONS* ♦ ♦ ♦

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COMPOSERS AND COMPOSITIONS



♦ AN "ENIGMA" BY STRAUSS

ONE of the irritating eccentricities of the creative mind in music is to write a work obviously founded on a programmatic idea and then to pretend, elaborately, that the work should be judged "wholly as music"—that is to say, as absolute music. Tchaikovsky indulged in it, as did Mahler; Edward Elgar went so far as to label the theme of his best-known work "Enigma" and dedicate it to "My friends pictured within" (whose identity was not finally established until after his death); and Richard Strauss reverted to the practice late in life with his *Metamorphosen* for string orchestra.

The customary contention by composers pressed to clarify their purpose is that their music should be judged wholly apart from the program that motivated it. With this view I am wholly in agreement, as I am sure the public at large is also: no piece of music succeeds because it has an enticing literary idea incompletely realized. On the other hand, understanding of a controversial work may be delayed or deferred or entirely defeated because the composer is concerned with one thing and the listener with something else.

It all relates, I think, to the snobbish attitude of the late nineteenth century, when Berlioz, Liszt, and Tchaikovsky were creating a new sort of orchestral music. The academic view was that Program Music (always capitalized) was somehow inferior to the theoretical Absolute Music. Reference was made approvingly to Beethoven (though his "*Eroica*" and "*Pastoral*" symphonies are enduring examples of works with programmatic ideas), and later to Brahms, as somehow superior to the composers who relied on literary allusions. Perhaps they were superior, but not because of the presence or absence of a "program." Nevertheless it became fashionable for those who used "programs" to pretend that none existed, to their disadvantage and ours.

Metamorphosen had a few tentative performances in New York shortly after the score appeared in 1946, one by Serge Koussevitzky, the other by Bruno Walter, but it has had none since. I say "tentative" not in disparagement of the effort expended by the interpreters, but rather because a major work of any contemporary composer, like a new house, has to settle and weather and acquire a familiar aspect before one can determine how well it suits the purpose for which it was built. If, as in the case of *Metamorphosen*, it carries the additional burden of a special sonority, it will necessarily have to fight the resistance of conductors concerned more with effect than with meaning.

Metamorphosen may be described as follows: it was written for twenty-three string instruments, each (even the three contrabasses) treated as a solo voice though sometimes coalescing with its neighbors to strengthen the total sonority. It was begun in March 1945 and completed a month later; it concludes with an epilogue quoting a famous phrase from the "*Marcia funebre*" of Beethoven's "*Eroica*."

None of this, however, would prepare the listener for what he would hear in a properly organized performance: a texture of remarkable richness, with some suggestions of the intimacy and eloquence of Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, an emotional statement of the utmost directness and power. It is as though the facile master of the orchestra rightfully called "Straussian" had willfully chosen, in the twilight of his great career, to show himself as capable of working with a chamber ensemble—if a chamber ensemble of his own unique invention. Now that we have gotten to know such other "last period" works as the *Sonatina* for wind instruments (misabeled "symphony" by his artistic executors) and the *Oboe Concerto*, it is clear that intricacies of texture were much in Strauss's mind in those last years.

But what metamorphoses, what changes, are hidden in these sweeping, oratorical measures? March and April 1945 were, of course, the months of Germany's final debacle, and some opinion saw in *Metamorphosen* a memorial exercise on behalf of Hitler, whose end impended. I reject this on a simple premise: Hitler was to Strauss a passing phase of a long life, one to whose political aims he never gave more than lip service, and, to a man of Strauss's realistic evaluation of himself, one whose destructiveness would be condemned by history when his own constructiveness would be extolled.

There is also an inclination to affiliate the *Metamorphosen* with the changes that had come upon Germany during Strauss's lifetime, its degradation by defeat in two world wars, the passing of the *Junker* society in which he had been reared, the disappearance of the monarchy that had enriched the artistic life (if nothing else) of Germany, the downfall of the Republic and the Third Reich—all sym-

bolic of the old order passing. I have a greater, but still limited sympathy, for this thesis. If Strauss was memorializing the Germany that had risen and fallen in his lifetime, it was primarily in terms of himself.

One has simply to recall that Strauss once wrote a work called *Ein Heldenleben* ("A Hero's Life")—the "hero's" accomplishments illustrated by quotations from his own works, at thirty-four!—to realize that the "hero" alluded to in the quotation from the "*Eroica*" is Strauss himself. *Metamorphosen*, then, could refer to the internal changes wrought in the composer himself in the eighty-one years he had lived when it was written; to the changed face of the artistic world in which, for so long, he had had his being; or even to the realization he was the last link in a chain of German composers stretching back one hundred and fifty years.

Metamorphosen strikes me, as I listen to it again and again, as the equivalent of what Bedřich Smetana called "*Aus meinem Leben*"—an autobiography in tone, with musical allusions taking the place of verbal ones. As is well known, Smetana did not deny us the scheme of his work, which can be read in sufficient detail in his own words to keep us abreast of his thought throughout. Childhood, marriage, early success, the affliction that cost him his hearing—all these allusions are clearly indicated. Perhaps Strauss felt that statement of his program—supposing it to be the one I have in mind—would be immodest. If so, this was a metamorphosis profounder than any contained in the work itself.

Strauss put a further mystery into his music by saving to the very end the "Funeral March" quotation (marked "*In Memoriam!*"), though familiarity with the score breeds the conviction that this was no afterthought, no epilogue,

but the point of departure for the whole work. His own first theme (which appears in measure 10) is a counterpoint of the "Eroica" phrase, and combines poignantly with it at the end. The presumption is that Strauss, man of the theater and master of dramatic effects, could not resist this particular resolution, though Strauss, musical philosopher and manipulator of the contrapuntal intricacies of *Metamorphosen*, wars with him constantly.

An absorbing aspect of *Metamorphosen* is the juxtaposition of two principal thematic ideas: this starting phrase, related to the "Eroica," and another phrase, immediately thereafter, which strongly suggests a paraphrase of the motive with which King Mark in *Tristan* admonishes the hero who has "betrayed" him. The significance of this I do not pretend to comprehend, save that at eighty-one Strauss may have been pondering recollections of the musicians by whom he was most influenced in his youth. They would, automatically, have been Beethoven and Wagner. (The veneration for Mozart came later.)

The "Aus meinem Leben" aspect of *Metamorphosen* is further conveyed by the sequence of emotional states in the music itself. A work without interruption during its thirty-minute span, it is a masterpiece of sustained tonal fabric, each strand spun out of the preceding one. It begins and ends in C minor, but it moves at ease through every possible key by Strauss's mastery of what we may call modulation by substitution. Where the ear anticipates a sharp, he provides a natural, thus, say, altering an E major resolution to E minor. Flats for naturals, naturals for sharps—all of these make a ladder of tonality on which he clammers from one key to another as only a composer who knew the rungs intimately from a lifetime's experience could do

with such agility. Sometimes he slips past the expected unexpected resolution, and then again he confounds us with the complete surprise of a traditional cadence. The feat of carrying this on for four hundred measures of string writing has yet to receive adequate recognition.

The "Eroica" paraphrase (which begins and ends *Metamorphosen*) reappears a number of times, but almost always in one special way—in C minor. When Strauss works out of the opening concern with it, the Wagnerian impulse takes over and soars over some sumptuous tonal territory in a vein of happy reminiscence. Siegfried appears to our ears, if not our eyes, and the atmosphere of the love duet with Brünnhilde suggests whatever the listener may want it to. But the "Eroica" theme is like a "Fate" motif in the wings, certain to reappear, always wearing a dark mask. Its threats are pushed aside repeatedly, but they are not really resistible, as the composer acknowledges near the work's end, when the C minor absorption becomes more constant, the light of hope in the music more flickering, the recognition of eventual surrender unmistakable.

"*Aus meinem Leben*" would, had Strauss thought of the title, surely have had to be, for his purposes, "*Aus meinem Heldenleben*." The parallel extends further than the mere words involved—for buried near the end of *Ein Heldenleben* is an earlier reference to the same work of Beethoven with which we are concerned here. I refer to the climbing figure, on the E flat scale, which Beethoven uses with an indescribably noble effect in the peroration of the variations in the finale of the "Eroica." It can be traced in the last section of *Ein Heldenleben*, whose general title is "The Hero's Escape from the World." It rises from the basses and climbs through the orchestra in a glow of golden sound providing

a sun-drenched conclusion to the whole. In contemplating himself forty-seven years later, Strauss rejects the poetic flight to the empyrean which served him at thirty-four. The *Marcia funebre* quotation is his personal epitaph for one whose well-spent life had been his constant inspiration: himself.

There is little doubt in my mind that this work, when enough people have grown to know and love it to make our conductors learn it and play it, will eventually stand as one of Strauss's richest contributions. "Unique" is certainly applicable to its manipulation of the string ensemble, and "unparalleled" to the quantum of sound discharged by the twenty-three instruments. In contrapuntal strandings and intersticings, it can take rank with another venerable man's thinking, Bach's *The Art of Fugue*.

There is also little doubt that a paragraph of explanation attached to the score, setting forth at minimum length the purpose of the musical allusions, would have added much to the listener's comprehension. At the same time, for one so well versed in the arts of publicity as Strauss, the very mystery might have been a calculated phase of its revelation to the world, prompting curiosity, speculation, and exposition in semilearned articles. Such as this one.

♦ MUSIC'S GENTLE HEART

REASONS for inviting attention to the subject of Bedřich Smetana are, in the nature of the man's work, necessarily limited. Because it presents no salient aspect of novelty, the usual type of learned essay is hardly in order. It is too modest in scope to attract those who concern themselves with Causes; too fragrantly social to merit the sort of societies that extend themselves on behalf of Bruckner and Mahler; not so dormant as Buxtehude nor so much the promotion of a specific locality as Sibelius.

For that matter, Smetana's life contained no contentious elements to invite romanticizing or fictionalization; he had no theories, as far as can be ascertained, to be defended or assailed: he merely wrote a great deal of infinitely appealing music that is neither totally neglected, nor, certainly, overplayed. Whether in this time of determined suppression of personal communication in art there is a place for a man whose art was as guileless as a puppy, as simple and straightforward as his own personality, may be questioned; but there is no question that those who do not know it are denying themselves one of music's most substantial pleasures.

That Smetana contributed anything to the history of music beyond the native wood-note he warbled so well I should be the last to assert: his was not an earth-shaking utterance that cannot be denied, forcing itself upon one, willing or not. I make note, merely, that it was so sophisticated a musician as Richard Strauss who first performed *Má Vlast* ("My Fatherland") in Germany. The late Tos-

canini, Sir Thomas Beecham, Bruno Walter, and Wilhelm Furtwängler have been devotees of one or another of the six tone poems in that cycle, not to mention such others as George Szell and Rafael Kubelik with experience in Prague, where Smetana spent so much of his life.

His place is to the side of the main flow of the musical stream. A distinctly beguiling spot, it is not one into which the listener is unavoidably thrust by an irresistible current. One could travel the broad highway of history and pass it by completely. But one would also be passing by a place of friendly vistas and rolling rustic terrain, not very carefully landscaped, with something of the quality of an untramed natural growth, though, on inspection, one would observe that the soil had been carefully tended. Smetana's soul did not crave, in the manner of Oliver Wendell Holmes, to build ever more stately mansions; but in the journey of the spirit there is a place for the country inn as well as for the Taj Mahal.

The heart is a muscle, we are frequently reminded by the rationalists; but the ancient superstition that ascribes to it the guardianship of our best, our soundest impulses, balances neatly, in Smetana, with this latter-day view. For the force that sent the warmth of his life blood coursing through his music must, indeed, have been a muscular one—powerful and steady and ever-renewing. I would put him, with Schubert and Johann Strauss, in a select group of composers to whom joy in music was a part of each day's physical functioning, without consideration for position, artistic ambition, or worldly recognition. When, on a visit to Prague, Liszt in the presence of the composer's friends said: "*Ja, der kann komponieren,*" Smetana probably knew a reward few men of wealth ever comprehend.

Were I asked to provide, in a single word, the sum of the qualities that recur in the Smetana works I know best, I should choose "remembrance," to describe the echoes in the music itself of distant days of childhood, youth, and adolescence. To be sure, Smetana's best-known works bear such titles as *My Fatherland*, *From My Life*, and *The Bartered Bride*, each with its quota of suggestive allusion. But it is their peculiarly hypnotic expressiveness that fulfills in the sounds the promise of the titles; it is the fecundity and swing of the musical ideas they contain which convey to us an atmosphere we have never experienced, and which, indeed, no longer exists as Smetana mirrored it. In his "Pastoral" Symphony, Beethoven ennobled the woods around Heiligenstadt in a hymn to nature to rejoice the soul of pantheists of every land: in his *Moldau*, Smetana evoked a specific corner of a specific land in a way to make us love it, perhaps not as much, but in the same spirit, as he loved it.

This is invariably accomplished with so deferential an air, so disarming a blend of homely simplicity and inconspicuous craftsmanship, that it is possible to understand why his superlative qualities are so frequently taken for granted, his essential distinction unrecognized. His works reflect a basic musicality that distinguishes the naturally ordained from the laboriously contrived. Many composers highly regarded by leaders of musical opinion and the public that follows in their wake—César Franck, Bruckner, Sibelius, among others—never invented a musical idea as captivating as the trio in the scherzo of Smetana's E minor Quartet, let alone pages of larger stride and greater expanse. But, it should be remembered, Smetana never played the

organ at Sainte-Clotilde, dedicated a symphony to the glory of God, or lived to be ninety.

His single extended absence from Bohemia (or, if one must, Czechoslovakia) was, typically enough, spent in Göteborg, Sweden, a city that could hardly enhance his fame. He spent five years (from the age of thirty-two to thirty-seven) as leader of its Philharmonic Society. Even his name was a stumbling block, as it is in some areas even today. Many years later, a German musician he met in this period (1862) recalled referring to him as Smetána. He was quickly corrected, to the tune of Beethoven's *Fidelio* Overture: "Smétana, Smétana, Smétana sprich aus":

ALLEGRO



Perversely, it was in Göteborg that Smetana began to formulate his conception of a Czech national music in such works as *Wallenstein's Camp*, *Richard III*, and the G minor Trio. As with his disciple Dvořák, absence from his homeland intensified his longing for it. German-speaking from birth, he devoted himself seriously to the study of Czech while in Göteborg (the musical colony included several compatriots) and eventually took pride in speaking and writing his people's language fluently.

Like Smetana's personal habits, his musical preferences were modest. He participated in the early enthusiasm for Wagner, but even late in life, when his own celebrity would

have assured him the privilege, avoided meeting the composer. He was fearful that an irruption of Wagner's famous rudeness would mar his regard for the musician. Playing the G minor Quintet of Mozart during his Göteborg period, he exclaimed at one point: "*Eine Offenbarung*" ("A revelation"). The friend who recalled the incident dated from this time Smetana's conviction that melody was the essential ingredient of music. Schubert's C major Symphony he knew by heart at a time when it was scarcely heard in the concert hall, and he took pleasure in conveying its marvels to less knowing friends. He enjoyed playing the violin and piano sonatas of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann. On social evenings he reveled in showing his excellence as a pianist in the works of Mozart, Chopin, and Schumann, whom he called "the three youngsters." Words, to Smetana, were the language of ideas: music was the language of feeling.

Remarkable as it may seem to us at this time, *The Bartered Bride* was undertaken to disprove the idea that he was, as Smetana phrased it, "a confirmed Wagnerian." Equally remarkable, it was not an instantaneous success. After the second performance—like the first, poorly attended, as war with Prussia had just broken out—he was asked to waive the provisions of a contract calling for six performances at a stipulated guarantee. His diary records his agreement, as the management had shown faith in him by staging his first opera, *The Brandenburgers*, and he felt he should be "decent."

As history attests, the quality of *The Bartered Bride* could not be denied, and by 1882 its hundredth performance was celebrated in Prague. Smetana was then far advanced in the deafness of his later years, but he accepted

the honors with typical self-effacement. In reply to the lavish praise, he responded: "I would only say that *The Bartered Bride* is perhaps hardly sufficient reason for such a celebration as has fallen to my lot today, for, when I wrote it I truly did not think of such a reward as the nation planned for me." Out of public hearing, he was, in typical composer fashion, more concerned about his "children" who had fared less well. "If you think that you give me special pleasure when you praise *The Bartered Bride* so highly," he once said, "you are mistaken. When I hear you speak like that it seems to me that you do not understand my other, better operas at all. My strength and joy lie elsewhere." Other, of course. Better? Hardly.

It is one among other ironies of Smetana's career that one primary means of making his identity known to the Western Hemisphere was the person and works of Antonin Dvořák, who once played in an orchestra directed by Smetana, and owed to the older man an unrepayable debt for encouragement at a crucial point of his career. Smetana was in every way the prototype, Dvořák the disciple, but the latter's wider travels and his longer career in sounder health, have tended to make us see their positions reversed.

Instances of the spiritual generosity that motivated Smetana are, perhaps, monotonously frequent, but it must be recorded that he said of Dvořák: "I am glad for the sake of the flowering of our music that I have such an excellent rival. Just look at the most glorious era of the great Paris opera: one day there was an opera by Meyerbeer, the second day by Auber, the third by Halévy, and the fourth by Rossini, and they all got on well together . . . why shouldn't it be possible here? Let each work according to his lights, let him honor the work of his fellows as he wishes

his work to be respected by others. Only in this way shall we raise our art to great heights."

For Smetana the privilege of "working according to his lights" was severely curtailed and eventually denied at the crest of his power, not long after his fiftieth birthday. As he has himself depicted it in his autobiographical String Quartet, his problem was not alone the grievous one of deafness. It was complicated by distortions, tonal hallucinations, and ringings, a perpetual sound that ravished his inner ear. The failure was gradual, the pursuit of relief relentless. The diagnoses were innumerable; his humor in the face of it all was persistent. "The inner apparatus," he wrote to a friend in the summer of 1875, "that admirable keyboard of our inner organ, is damaged, out of tune, the hammers have got stuck and up to now no tuner has succeeded in repairing the damage."

Of the great works that he created despite his affliction (all those written after 1876, including *Má Vlast*, the E minor Quartet, *The Kiss*, and *Dalibor*), the library shelves are eloquent testimonial. Unfortunately, in our formalized concert life, the testimonial is more mute than glorious. But the individual listener need not accept such silence: a growing amount of authentic Smetana is available on discs recorded in Czechoslovakia. We might, in replaying *The Kiss* recall that when it was performed, Smetana (like the deaf Beethoven at the first performance of his *Missa solennis*) was a witness rather than an auditor. To a friend he wrote: "Unfortunately I was the only one in the packed house who did not hear a single note of the music, my own music into the bargain."

Allusion to Beethoven is perhaps inevitable in a discussion of Smetana, though it would be extravagant to equate the

two men or their reaction to a similar hard fate. That superhuman tenacity of mind and determination of spirit which enabled Beethoven to live almost half a lifetime and an epoch of musical innovation despite his handicap was hardly in the makeup of Smetana. He applied himself as best he could, but the general physical fiber was frail; his powers of concentration and recollection were impaired. He was barely sixty when he died in the Prague Lunatic Asylum.

Smetana himself gave us a phrase to measure the void that separated him from Beethoven. In an outburst of enthusiasm for a passage in the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony, he said: "*Das ist keine irdische Musik mehr, das ist göttliche Offenbarung.*" ("That is no earthly music. That is divine revelation.") Smetana's was always an "*irdische Musik*," but the sounds of earth he heard were superbly harmonious, attuned by an inner ear that knew better than most how to listen, perhaps because Nature had willed it that way.

♦ PETER JEKYLL, ILICH HYDE

THE PHYSICAL frame that housed the contradictions of P. I. Tchaikovsky has long since ceased to exist, but the evidence of those contradictions in his musical works will long continue to absorb the attention of those who think as well as listen, ponder as they wonder. The swing from gaiety to gloom, from exultation to depression, is familiar enough in the great works of the greatest composers, a measurement, indeed, of the emotional range they command. Without it, they would hardly rate as "great."

At bottom, the Beethoven of the profound first movement of the C sharp minor Quartet and of its whirling finale, which Wagner termed the "world's own Dance," is the same man, strong in dejection, strong in exuberance. But how is one to equate the sunny, soaring flight of *The Sleeping Beauty* with the lead-dead, downward plummet of the "Pathétique" Symphony? These are not merely opposites or contradictions—one is the negation of the other.

Relating the recesses of the nature that produced the doleful "None but the Lonely Heart" and "*Sérénade mélancolique*" on the one side, the exhilarating waltzes of the *Casse-Noisette* on the other, to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a simple way of putting the question, but the answer is something decidedly more complex. Nor is it sufficient to invoke Tchaikovsky's homosexuality, his ill-advised marriage (annulled with the groom at the edge of a nervous breakdown), or even the celebrated Slavic temperament. Much music of many sorts has been written by other homo-

sexuals (though none, perhaps, who shared with a brother the deadly dread of "This") without verging on Tchaikovsky's kind of artistic schizophrenia; other composers have endured, or escaped from, hopeless marriages; and the Russian melancholia that sometimes afflicted Rachmaninoff neither rose so high nor descended so low. The works of such other Slavs as Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Balakirev, and Mussorgsky stir or soothe, but do not similarly intoxicate or distress.

Tchaikovsky's music is the product, plainly, of a duality on two levels, personal and musical. Often they are so intermingled as to be inseparable—was he mostly at ease with the world because he was writing *The Sleeping Beauty*, or did the mood dictate the music? He was capable, in one week, of saying "I have become terribly misanthropical," and in the next: "I am in a rose-colored mood." Situations in which he could speak seriously of suicide alternated with those in which he made clear his loathing of "the snub nose horror," as he called death. He approached a true self-analysis when he wrote to Mme von Meck: "As regards religion, I must confess I have a dual temperament . . ." a statement that could express his situation if he broadened its scope from religion to everything about himself.

When Taneiev, in his first scrutiny of the F minor Symphony (No. 4), found "phrases" in every movement which "sounded like ballet music," he was being more perceptive, perhaps, than he knew. Tchaikovsky defended himself with more asperity than it would seem the situation demanded: "I can never understand why 'ballet music' should be used as a contemptuous epithet . . . when the music is good what difference does it make whether Sobieschanskaya dances it or not?" But, always, symphony with the capital

"S" occupied a higher rank in his personal aspirations, whether or not it was one for which his talents were best suited.

Some of this may have been due to the influence of Mme von Meck, for whom the Fourth was "our symphony" and the Fifth a project followed closely from start to finish. By the time of the "*Pathétique*," she had retired from the scene: it is inscribed to young "Bobyk" Davidov, with whom, it is generally agreed, Tchaikovsky had the last liaison of his life. To banish any of this music, or that of the first three symphonies, from the repertory would be a deprivation, certainly, but I could forego them all sooner than I could spare one of the ballets. Tchaikovsky the symphonist was a composer of talent working against conditions inimical to him; Tchaikovsky the ballet-creator was a composer of genius supremely suited to the medium.

There is frequent allusion, in discussions of Tchaikovsky's ballets, to the rigid formulas prescribed by the choreographers—Petipa, Ivanov, etc.—with whom he worked: sixty-four measures of "*musique douce*" followed by eight measures of "*musique petillante*"; "*musique bruyante et joyeuse*" for twenty-four measures succeeded by a march of sixty-four measures, etc. To achieve spontaneity under such circumstances would seem beyond any man—but it was not beyond this one.

This was the man who wrote to Mme von Meck in 1878: "I cannot complain of poverty or imagination or lack of inventive power, but, on the other hand, I have always suffered from want of skill in the management of form. Only after strenuous labor have I at last succeeded in making the form of my compositions correspond, more or less, with their contents. Formerly I was careless and did not give sufficient at-

tention to the critical overhauling of my sketches. Consequently my seams showed, and there was no organic union between my individual episodes."

Something about this letter stirred an echo, eventually isolated in another comment, a decade later (1888) to the Grand Duke Constantine: "All my life I have been much troubled by my inability to grasp and manipulate form in music. I have fought hard against this defect, and can say with pride that I achieved some progress, but I shall end my days without ever having written anything that is perfect in form. What I write has always a mountain of padding: an experienced eye can detect the thread in my seams, and I can do nothing about it."

At the very time Tchaikovsky was confessing his perplexity with "form in music" (the nineteenth-century notion of Approved Form, that is), a younger man was solving the problem in his own way. Writing to Hans von Bülow in the same year (1888), Richard Strauss (only twenty-four, but with *Don Juan* awaiting performance) said: "From the F minor Symphony [a work of his earlier twenties] onward I have found myself in a gradually ever-increasing contradiction between the musical-poetic content that I want to convey and the ternary sonata form that has come down to us from the classical composers. . . . Now, what was for Beethoven a 'form' absolutely in congruity with the highest, most glorious content is now, after sixty years, used as a formula inseparable from our instrumental music (which I strongly dispute) simply to accommodate and enclose a 'pure musical' (in the strictest and narrowest meaning of the word) content, or worse, stuff and expand a content with which it does not correspond."

Dealing with the importance of the "poetic content,"

Strauss, with a typically Teutonic kind of thought-taking, continues: "I consider it a legitimate artistic method to create a correspondingly new form for every subject, to shape which neatly and perfectly is a very difficult task, but for that reason the more attractive." A bold program for a composer of twenty-four, but one that he proceeded to implement magnificently in *Till Eulenspiegel* (a rondo), *Tod und Verklärung* (a fantasy following a verbal program closely), *Don Quixote* (a theme and variations), *Ein Heldenleben* (almost exactly a four-movement symphony within a single span), and the *Sinfonia domestica*, in which the implications of *Sinfonia* are quite closely carried out.

Had Tchaikovsky had the capacity to be as cerebral about his problem as Strauss was, his nonballetic orchestral work might have taken a different turn sooner than it did. With the "*Pathétique*," Tchaikovsky was finally making such music the instrument of his purpose rather than himself being the instrument of the music's purpose. Previously he had lavished some of his best needlework on the tattered patches of such motley garments as *Francesca da Rimini*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet* without producing anything really shapely. The sense of independence which enabled him to end a symphony with a slow movement was a momentous development. Unfortunately it came a little late, for he was dead within days after its first performance.

What Strauss evolved by reason, Tchaikovsky arrived at by chance, finding in the "confines" of a ballet sequence the freedom from personal concern about "form" which hampered and constrained him otherwise. Forced by the procedures of the medium to suit his fantasy to the flow of the script, he cut the cloth to the measure of someone else's

frame, the "seams" were automatically concealed, and he turned out a much neater musical article as a consequence. Least of all was there the "mountain of padding" which he deplored in his letter to Grand Duke Constantine.

In addition to absolution from the problem of form, ballet provided Tchaikovsky with another latitude that symphonies did not. All music grows by a spinning out of a design from basic threads or elements. What is termed the "development" section of classical symphonies was scoffed at as "arithmetic" by the Five when they played them at the piano, four hands. Tchaikovsky's efforts to follow such procedures they decried as evidence of his "Western" tendencies. They are, certainly, the least convincing part of the whole formal process with which he was uneasy.

In ballet, however, musical extension comes either from an endless flow of new ideas—which rarely presented any problem to him—or, generically, from variations on which the choreographer builds his scenes. It just happens (as is clear to those who are familiar with the finale of the Second Symphony, the Andante con Moto of the Trio, Opus 50, the treatment of a "rococo" theme in the Variations for cello and orchestra, or the finale of the Third Suite) that Tchaikovsky was one of music's greatest masters of the variation technique. Whether by sudden shifts of rhythms, ingenious introduction of countermelodies, darting background figures, embellishing colorations in higher or lower choirs, throughout *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Casse-Noisette* he contrived patterns of delight which enable us to share his pleasure in doing usual things in an unusual way. With what a sense of expectancy he prepares the entrance of Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, with what verve and theatrical

excitement! It is as though he is sharing the viewer's anticipation of the "Rose Adagio" to come, and can hardly wait, with him, to see how it is going to turn out.

Finally, ballet freed him of a problem that tortured his mind every time he turned to its allied theatrical form, opera. Even when it was *Onegin*, in whose creation he was happily absorbed, he could write to Tancieff: "The opera *Onegin* will never have a success. I already feel assured of that. I shall never find singers capable, even partially, of fulfilling my requirements." Or to Mme von Meck: "Where shall I find a Tatiana such as Pushkin dreamed of, and such as I have striven to realize in music? Where is the artist who can approach the ideal *Onegin*, that cold-hearted dandy, impregnated to the marrow of his bones with the fashionable notion of 'good tone'? Where is there a Lensky, that youth of eighteen with the flowing locks and the gushing and would-be-original manners of a poetaster à la Schiller?"

Where, indeed? Few of us have seen them in *Onegin* or in any other opera. But today we can compare an Alonso with a Fonteyn, a Markova with a Danilova, and feel confident, seventy-five years afterwards, that Tchaikovsky might have considered them favorably beside his own Sobieschanskaya. Ballet pridefully perpetuates its types: opera strives to escape from its.

How much of all these predispositions, limitations, sympathies, and aversions went into the conscious creation of Tchaikovsky's ballets is, on the face of it, conjectural. But the scores themselves, with their lilt and flow and unbounded ability to take wings and bear the dancers with them, admit of no conjecture. In them, of all his music known to me, Tchaikovsky came closest to achieving the ability to "captivate, delight, and comfort" which he found

in the works of Mozart. Certainly he never approached elsewhere the same kind of fecundity, the certainty and direction that make *Sleeping Beauty* entire, and large parts of the other ballets, enduring testimony to his own belief in music as "most beautiful of all heavenly gifts."

Save for a full-length study of the total personality, a dissection by competent authority of the psychic-phenomenon called Tchaikovsky, lay comment can be only tentative. Such a study would make welcome reading, if only to resolve a tentative and probably farfetched hypothesis of mine that something about the duality of Tchaikovsky's nature might be biological. Ten years after his birth, his mother gave birth to a set of twins, Modi and Toli. Might the single body of the composer also have been intended to be similarly subdivided, the thwarted purposes of nature thus coming to be at war with each other?

In such circumstance one could reconcile the air-borne melodic flight of the serene *pas de quatre* (Act III) of *Sleeping Beauty* with the earth-bound, brooding crouch of the opening of the "*Pathétique*," otherwise so difficult to reconcile as the product of a single nature. The only conciliation, really, comes from the recognition that they are, basically, the same idea:

ALLEGRO NON TANTO



(*Pas de quatre* FROM *Sleeping Beauty*)

a chain of movements scalewise, with an almost identical graph of rise and fall (within an octave) along the staff, close enough for twinship as well as kinship. What is a smile in one treatment is a grimace in the other, showing us, in sound, the equivalent of the twin masks of comedy and tragedy. Which is as close as dualism, musically, can come. Variations, indeed!



PEOPLE AND PLACES





PEOPLE AND PLACES



♦ VARIATIONS ON AN ENIGMA

AS AGES go, seventy-five is a reasonable dividing line between youth and maturity, a point at which the fresh, irrational, irresponsible tendencies of development should be overtaken and subdued by the settling influences of experience. The certain fact is, however, that the possessor of one of music's liveliest minds, a noted maestro, too, passed this mark on April 18, 1957, only to leave it unmentioned, unrecognized, and in all probability uncelebrated. Granted continued good health, the likelihood is that his eightieth, on April 18, 1962, will likewise pass unobserved.

This is certainly his personal privilege, altogether within his prerogatives as a private citizen. But can one detach oneself so completely from the effects of which one is the cause, so deny the ends of which one is the means? Must one accept the thesis that the Philadelphia Orchestra is a mere chimera, the man who created it a fleeting apparition, without time or place, date of birth or origin?

The occasions, indeed, when some suggestion of such facts comes to public attention are usually—in perversion of the usual cry of “misquotation”—when they are correctly

given. As in the instance reported from Florida a few years ago when a radio announcer, reading from a biography in type these many years, was rudely interrupted by the subject himself and the world told heatedly that it was all false.

He was born, according to documents I have seen reproducing the legal entry, in London on April 18, 1882. His father was Polish (a cabinetmaker by trade), his mother Irish. Most of his education was English, including Queen's College, Oxford, and the Royal Academy of Music. He came to America as a choirmaster and organist at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue in New York in his mid-twenties. Already he was possessed of the urge that was to dominate his life, and after a visit or two to Europe, where he played the violin in orchestras directed by such men as Nikisch, he gravitated to Cincinnati as conductor of its symphony orchestra in 1909. By 1912, when he was thirty, he was qualified to be invited to Philadelphia. Cincinnati graciously released him from several years of an unexpired contract.

The plain indications, therefore, are that all the accents subsequently acquired—they vary from year to year, but include “me-crophone” (for microphone), “no-ledge” (for knowledge), “sikeatrist” (for psychiatrist), and “orchéstra” (for orchestra)—are fulsomely phony, preposterously affected, and without doubt invented for whatever “wannaful” (wonderful) “meestery” (mystery) they might impart to his conversation. I have heard it said that, in the aftermath of Polish sufferings circa World War I—with which he identified himself spiritually—he spoke for a while with a pronounced Slavic accent. In moments of stress, the veneer peels off, the hard core of able, unaffected invective bores

through—to give way in the next moment to a description of a work by Bach as “an inspired inspiration.”

For a while, his aspirations proceeded along conventional lines. The orientation to Nikisch has been mentioned. But there was much to learn, and he worked hard at learning it. Soon enough the strong traits of personality which distinguished his work were perceptible. To make a hundred men play as one was his life's objective, and he deeply believed that they would sound as one if each man played his part as an individual and artist conscious of the meaning of the music rather than as an automaton. He lectured his men on the spirit of the music they played, begging them to penetrate Beethoven or Tchaikovsky for themselves, and then to re-create the music through him. On tours in Cincinnati days, he literally played ball with his personnel when a bus stop permitted, as a way of engaging their sympathies and preserving the physical well-being he has always cherished. Contemporary photos show him lean and muscular, stretching gracefully for a high one.

Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia, results began to be noticed. In an article (1912) for *Musical America*, Arthur L. Judson (to be better known not only without the middle initial, but also simply as A. J.) wrote: “An audience cannot be blamed if it does not look forward to the performance of a Brahms symphony nor can it be blamed if it does not become enthusiastic over its rendition. . . . When he had finished [the Brahms C minor], his audience felt that it knew the work for the first time. The applause was tremendous, the recalls countless. The reception was not that of an audience merely glad that it had a competent conductor, but wildly enthusiastic because it had discovered a genius.” Jud-

son too had discovered an enthusiasm and business interest that endured for a quarter century.

As word of his achievements spread, so did his desire for new worlds to conquer. A venture to New York for a charity concert in 1914 earned but modest accolades: "pleasing" from one critic, "not . . . to be accounted a great conductor, he is an interesting one" from another. Not until the famous visit of April 10, 1916, when he gave the massive Eighth Symphony of Mahler its first performance in New York, did the insular critics of Manhattan Island give him a hearty welcome. Here was orchestral mastery of a high order, it was agreed, combining in perfect union the elements of what was called the "Symphony of a Thousand." In the distance, if hardly discernible, was the day when he would turn the same mastery to making the forty string players of his orchestra sound like four in the "Serenade" from Haydn's F major (opus 3, No. 5) Quartet.

The war somewhat retarded the development of his perfect instrument (some twenty first-desk players who made their homes abroad and were brought to Philadelphia for the winter were unable to return in 1914), but even when replacements were engaged and New York visits were undertaken on a regular schedule, one churl lectured from the podium of the *New York Post*: "It is hardly worth while to bring an orchestra all the way from Philadelphia to let us hear once more Beethoven's Eighth Symphony and the 'Trois Nocturnes' of Debussy." (But there were those who considered it worth-while to travel to Philadelphia to hear the brass band concerts he conducted out of doors to aid the sale of Liberty Bonds.)

From this kind of scolding, perhaps, derived the singular

repertory with which the Philadelphia Orchestra delighted its New York subscribers in its days of greatest glory. There was a void in the musical life of America at that time, and its conductor filled it fully for more than a decade. Russian music attracted him, likewise French. He had an ear—or an eye—for the asperities of Schönberg (of the *Kammersymphonie* and *Five Orchestral Pieces* sort); he responded to Hindemith; he sought out such American purveyors of the odd and esoteric as Cowell and Eichheim. Not only did he expend much effort to make the unfamiliar sound familiar, and admonish his public when it was unappreciative: as time passed, too, some of the effort also went into making the familiar sound unfamiliar, with countercontentions when some of the press found the results unattractive.

Some of the unfamiliar got into the discs he made in this period. For the most part, however, he adhered to a powerful standard repertory of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, Franck and Brahms (the spoken commentary provided with a 78 r.p.m. recording of Brahms's *First Symphony* made in 1928 would give an able language student fits), with an occasional digression to Scriabin and Glière. Eventually the sales appeal of his Bach transcriptions was recognized and acted upon. If ambition to be a conductor had taken him from the organ, ambition to be a special kind of conductor impelled him to make the orchestra a greater "organ" than any built by human hands.

As the possibilities of mechanical reproduction broadened, so did his repertory. He made the first recording anywhere of a Shostakovich symphony (1932) and the first in America of Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*. He gave the first stage presentation in America of *Wozzeck*, he produced

Schönberg's *Gurrelieder*, he took part in presentations by the League of Composers of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Chávez's *H.P.*, and Schönberg's *Die glückliche Hand*.

Such an energy as he possessed was unique among the musicians of his time. One day he would be reprimanding a Philadelphia audience for its tardy comings and goings, the next explaining in laborious detail the intricacies of a quarter-tone composition he was about to introduce. No other conductor considered Rimsky's *Scheherazade* in need of more than the best possible orchestral performance; he thought its effect could be enhanced by the intercession of a "Clavilux," or color organ, throwing abstruse designs in varicolored patterns on a screen while the orchestra played behind it. On another occasion, he decided that the light from the musicians' stands was a distraction to the listening attention, and ordered them replaced by dimmer ones. In compensation, a blinding shaft from an overhead spotlight was focused on the lithe figure on the podium.

No one who lived through his time can forget the anticipation that attended each visit to New York of his superb Philadelphia Orchestra, whose members reflected their championship qualities in glossier appearances than the staid Philharmonic or Boston men; the lines that formed on superspecial occasions to buy up the few seats or standing room; the new artists he introduced; the old works he revived; the cascades of tone that engulfed the hall when the work was Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Overture*—not yet embellished by a baritone voice where the composer wrote none—the "Venusberg Music" from *Tannhäuser*, or even the Brahms Fourth or the Beethoven Seventh.

Nor, on the other hand, can one forget the attempt—during a period of retrenchment in the phonograph business—

to play a Brahms symphony with forty men (and almost as many microphones) and make them sound like eighty. Or the occasion during the pioneer days of broadcasting—to which he contributed a good deal—when he demanded a control panel he could monitor himself as final arbiter of what went on the air. He got the panel, but with dummy controls that influenced no ear, affected no judgment but his own. Or his proposition to “idealize” opera by combining a perfectly played performance, electronically reproduced, with mimed actions by physically plausible actors. Discs would not be used, and a “secret” method of sound perpetuation was hinted at. This was in 1932, and we know that he became acquainted with a primitive form of magnetic tape on a Berlin visit of 1931. At about the same time he was taking part in the experimentation that produced the first longer-playing record, which—through no fault of his own—was a failure.

With these and other *jeux d'esprit* went forays to India and the Orient for exotic instruments to complement the range of the now feeble and conquered orchestra; for gamelans and tam-tams of new sizes and timbres. There were additions to the orchestra of theremin, vibraphone, and other oddities. The orchestra was shifted, reshifted, and seated anew. All the first violinists were concertmasters, in rotation, during a season in the thirties, and the others could bow up, or down, or sideways, in a further extension of self-expression. One concertmaster, so named and designated, retired because he could not understand the silence that separated him from the conductor. No blame, but no praise.

The long affair with the city by the Schuylkill came to an end, with gradual stages of disillusion, trial separation, and final divorce. Some interesting details emerged when con-

tract terms leaked out, as they will under such circumstances. He had come to Philadelphia, initially, for a fee of \$600 a concert. It eventually rose to \$2,000 a concert for fifty-five concerts per year. In the year of the \$110,000 contract with the orchestra, he had also earned \$70,000 for radio appearances and \$60,000 in record royalties.

Obviously \$240,000 was more money than one could shake a stick at in most places. He was soon located in the one place where comparable income was possible, appearing in such films as *The Big Broadcast* of 1937 (publicity "stills" showed Benny Goodman with currently hot clarinet posed beside him), then in such others as Deanna Durbin's *One Hundred Men and a Girl* and Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, in which he conducted portions of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* and Beethoven's "Pastoral" while Deems Taylor told the movie-goers what to feel. The sound track, recently processed for use by home phonograph owners, came close to what was not to be known for another ten years as high fidelity.

While shifting his attention westward, he continued to serve as guest conductor with the Philadelphia Orchestra at home and on tour, as it accomplished a difficult—eventually successful—transition to the musical direction of Eugene Ormandy. The old affiliation was never again what it had been before 1934, when Arthur Judson gave up its business direction to concentrate on other affairs in New York.

After Philadelphia, his vitality flowed into the creation of the Youth Orchestras of 1940 and 1941, with which he undertook several national and international tours (to South America). Intensive auditions and even more intensive preparation—numerous fine orchestral players of later years had their first opportunity in these groups—enabled him to

organize an orchestra on the Philadelphia model in scarcely more than weeks. In the aftermath of this, the NBC Symphony beckoned, but he was not meant for drawing a wagon also hitched to a star named Toscanini—even though he undertook to resolve a difficulty about repertory by offering “any assistance” he could in preparing the chorus for a Toscanini performance of a Brahms choral work. No more was he well adjusted to working with the opportunities provided by the New York City Center—though he gave some brilliant concerts there—or in the nonresponsive reaches of the Hollywood Bowl (some of his electronic ideas resulted in a staggering expenditure for amplifying devices, subsequently discarded). All were in various respects confining, without the autonomy or the orientation to a special situation which he had enjoyed in Philadelphia.

On the first of two times I spent in his presence, I was awarded some choice tidbits of attitude and viewpoint. It was in the late forties (probably 1948), and I had been bidden to an audience after a series of reviews in which I had intimated that he had found in the First Symphony of Brahms and the “New World” of Dvořák some things not been found in them by other conductors—which, in fact, could not be found in them after diligent search by better musicians than myself.

We met in the RCA Victor establishment on East Twenty-fourth Street in New York. I was armed with marked scores and the relevant records. He was armed with incomparable self-assurance and an Olympian disregard for a contrary point of view. Preliminaries disposed of, we settled to a hearing of his Brahms No. 1 and a discussion of its deviations from the printed score. Pointing to a place in the score, I said: “Ritard.?” He shook his head: “No ritard.”

"But you make a ritard.?" I queried. "I feel a ritard.," he answered.

This was fairly routine for a conductor, in the realm of critical hairsplitting. But the "New World" posed other questions. "Let's start with the first movement," I suggested. With the open score before us, I pointed to a certain measure in the introduction as it was playing: "It's written as a quarter and an eighth. You hold it for the whole measure, disregarding the rest. Why?" He looked at me, blandly unconcerned: "It's like the sustaining pedal on the piano," he answered. "You press it down and the sound reverberates through the hall." "But," I ventured, "Dvořák didn't write it that way." His shoulder shrug suggested that what Dvořák wrote had validity only up to a point—the point of the ten fingers of his famous hands.

For a final query, we turned to the finale of the "New World." Urged along by his rhythmic instinct, his snap and drive, it went briskly, youthfully, powerfully. But, at a climax came the deep ringing "bong" of a tam-tam (one of those brought back, no doubt, from Malaya or Indonesia). I looked at him, questioningly. He looked back, with quiet pride in the shattering effect thus achieved.

"There's no tam-tam in the score, is there?" I inquired. "No tam-tam," he answered. "Then why do you put it in?" "I feel the need for a new color, a climax," he answered. "But suppose somebody hears a broadcast by Szell or the Toscanini recording next week, after buying yours," I suggested. "Isn't he going to miss the tam-tam and blame the conductor for leaving it out?" He looked at me, all innocence: "I never thought of that. When I play music, I am thinking of the spirit of the composer ["kumpuzer"]. I want to reach out with my records to the lonely sheep-

rancher in Nevada or the farmer in Kansas and bring him a glimpse of the ideal world of beauty and inspiration."

The only answer for this was to adjourn to a bar at the corner of Twenty-third Street and Third Avenue and, as Alan Kayes can attest, agree that the bock beer was excellent, and listen to his recollections of India, a "fascinating country." It was the exoticism that appealed to him, the fact that everybody looks "so different."

In the musical sphere, his wide-eyed wonder that anybody should find the "spirit of the composer" misrepresented by him might be written off as naïveté if it did not consort with a musical mentality of the highest sophistication and intuition. One cannot mark him down as either a charlatan or a poseur, for his accomplishments are too considerable, his attainments beyond belittling, whatever one may think of this manifestation or that. As a force in shaping the contemporary concept of orchestral execution, he occupies an equal, if polar, position with Toscanini. If the inner tension of music has rarely been realized so fully as in some of Toscanini's interpretations, so the outer, surface sheen has rarely been polished so glowingly as in his.

One cannot, in short, write him off, whether he is making music flow like oil in Houston, Texas, expounding Orff at a summer festival, or merely brooding over the next possible eruption, like a human Popocatepetl or Etna. Like them, he draws his power from some source deep in the nature of things, with a capacity—either fire or ashes, or merely smoke—quite elemental. I would go, with reasonable dispatch, to hear any concert he might give in New York or nearby; but I would go with the knowledge that, however it might be, it would be different from what I imagined it was going to be.

Whether this constitutes a virtue or even a recommendation is hard to say. The same words about Leonard Bernstein or the late Guido Cantelli in their thirties would propose the lure of a talent not wholly known, with the possibilities of development inherent in any man of formative years (the formative years of a conductor go on until suddenly one season, he is a maestro). But one expects from a conductor at seventy-five not the willful but the well-considered, not the mercurial but the measured restatement of musical truths perceived from a lifetime of attention and application.

If the point of these remarks remains, after so many words, still obscure, let me state it quite bluntly: I cannot understand how, after so long a period of absorption in so demanding an art, he still remains outside its fundamental sense of order, its demand for mental discipline, its logical, arithmetical organization; how, with all his experience, he has shown time and again he clearly prefers that a quarter and an eighth equal two quarters.

Sometimes, after a searing contact with a new, brilliant and fundamentally pointless recording by him, I tend to the opinion that music per se means little to him, that all he cares about is the effect he can make with a composition. Then I remember a charming realization of so slight a piece as an entr'acte from Schubert's *Rosamunde* or the accompaniment he provided for Joseph Szigeti's New York debut in the Beethoven Concerto in 1927, or such a superb effort as a recent Schumann Second—and I wonder.

This same Szigeti turns our thoughts to one possible solution, in his recollection (published in the autobiography, *With Strings Attached*) of a concert he heard in London in 1908. The then less than youthful maestro produced, so Szigeti recalled, the "typical sound of his maturity," leading

his players with the "feline suppleness" familiar to us much later. Was he, as some reports from Cincinnati and Philadelphia also suggest, a man who clearly knew what he wanted, and was even then on the verge of getting it? Did his celebrity come too soon and last too long?

I thought of this, again, on the second of the two occasions I visited with him. This was within a year or two, to consider a piano concerto by Kurt Leimer which he was performing with the Symphony of the Air, for which I was to write an annotation. He had brought Leimer from Germany at his own expense to be the soloist, and our meeting was arranged for the composer to discuss the contents of my note. The appointed place was his apartment on Fifth Avenue near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the purpose was accomplished within an hour.

I was about to leave when he said: "Don't go yet. It's almost five. The boys will soon be here." Almost simultaneously the doors of the elevator opened, and we were surrounded by two active youths, Chris and Stan, both blond, both handsome. They were dressed in Tyrolese outfits purchased during a visit to Germany the year before.

Observing the affection of the elderly father for the tykes of seven and nine or thereabouts, one sensed, almost, a realization of his seeking for a permanent cessation of time. In a fanciful way, there seemed a generation missing in the image presented by the obviously fond parent and the somewhat bewildered children. It was as though, by the exercise of an incredible alchemy, he had made life mirror what he strove to achieve in art. But, perversely, art is not so accommodating, even for Leopold Stokowski.

♦ NO THOMAS LIKE SIR THOMAS

NOT WITHOUT relevance to the subject himself, the only musician whose acquaintance I owe to a bad notice is Sir Thomas Beecham. Before the reader assumes that he is a paragon who requites unkindness with kindness, I should mention that *his* part of a joint undertaking with the Columbia Record Company was commended, the reproduction of it condemned. Not until long after I had received the following letter (from Seattle, where he was spending part of 1942) did I become aware of circumstances that had made both parts of the comment welcome to him:

Dear Mr. Kolodin:

I have read with interest your notice of the "Capriccio Italien" records and enclose a copy of a letter written by me some weeks ago to my lawyer. I should be obliged if you would look at it for I think it raises some questions of public interest. Anyway two things are clear: the records were issued in spite of my protests that they were imperfect and an attempt is being made to convince the public that they are of first rate quality by the company. Is this honest, decent or even sensible? I think that those responsible for this outrage are both fools and knaves and in the public interest should be exposed.

I am,

Sincerely yours,
THOMAS BEECHAM

Having already been for fifteen years an admirer of Beecham's musical taste and his execution of what his taste decreed, I was readily disarmed by this inferential endorsement

of my taste. I neither seek nor avoid the acquaintance of persons with whose works I have professional dealings. Each is a case to be judged individually, though, I may add, it is not difficult most times to reach negative conclusions. This is in accord with Matthew Arnold's belief that "the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice." There are, however, performers whose position no critical words can help or harm, and much can be learned from them. I have never regretted regarding Sir Thomas as the head of that class.

Had I been unfortunate enough to believe otherwise, I would have foregone some of the most stimulating talk on music and musicians I have ever encountered, regardless of the professional status of the person who held them. Most professionals are interested in music because it is what they are best at, something they cannot afford not to do. I firmly believe Sir Thomas would have been a musical enthusiast and connoisseur even if conducting had not been something that he was, also, able to afford to do professionally. I am not in possession of verified figures, but I am certain he could have owned more houses, had leisure to write more books, edited and transcribed more music, and lived a less troubled life without conducting or recording. Reginald Kell is one musician who has conveyed to me the general English view that Beecham has put far more money into music—via the Beecham Orchestra, the Beecham Opera, the various Covent Garden ventures, and the reorganization and support of the London Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic orchestras—than he has taken out of it.

Of course, no one could put a price on what he has taken out of it in pleasure—which, I suspect, is the essence of his career. He has not, to my knowledge, ever played anything

he did not want to play; nor has anyone ever prevented him from performing something he wanted to play. What other conductor would devote part of a precious guest engagement in New York City with the Philadelphia Orchestra to performing Lord Berners's *Triumph of Neptune Suite* just because Berners was a lifelong friend and the piece has a laugh-provoking caricature of a parlor baritone singing "The Last Rose of Summer"? The price of such self-indulgence comes high, and Beecham has paid for it not only in coin of the realm, but in the hard work required to make his professional status secure despite the keen pleasure he obviously takes in his work.

On an occasion when he joined in a radio program I was presenting, I asked him in what achievement he took the greatest pride. "I take pride," he said, "only in my industry." The words could mean any of several things (such as earning his own title; creating a series of musical movements in England which demonstrated, at least, that his fellow Britons did not want touring opera on a grand scale; forming orchestra after orchestra in an effort to raise standards of performance). I associate it with his command not only of as large a "standard" repertory as that of most of his colleagues, but also with a specifically Beecham nonstandard repertory of works by Dvořák, Liszt, Balakirev, Schubert, Borodin, Mozart, Schumann, Richard Strauss, Delius, Grieg, Karl Goldmark, Berlioz, Rossini, Franck, Handel, Sibelius, and Tchaikovsky which could only have been the product of tedious trial and error. Why, for example, Franck's *Chasseur maudit* rather than Franck's *Psyché*? Largely, no doubt, because he had the industry to investigate both and decide that the less-played score pleased him better than the more familiar one.

Could a Beecham have flourished, for the general good of the musical community, anywhere except in England? Anything is possible, but I doubt that a Beecham could happen in this country, for example, much less in France or Germany. The English are accustomed to eccentricity—not necessarily to them a derogatory term. If a poor man's son can learn to play cricket well enough to be knighted, why cannot a rich man's son learn to play music well enough so as not to be benighted? Much of Beecham's celebrated "personality" has been created for a calculated purpose, his ripostes, jocularities, and dire predictions of evil days impending being contrived for the best of reasons—to draw attention not only to the speaker, but also to the subject (music). One does not wait to denounce the Edinburgh Festival until one arrives in Edinburgh unless one wants to call attention to the fact that there is an Edinburgh Festival. In a country that can relish such jokes as Oscar Wilde's description of a fox hunt as "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable," such matters are understood as a matter of course. Also, a man who knows how to lose a fortune productively must necessarily rank higher than one who only knows how to make a fortune unproductively.

In a perspective of some years I have seen Beecham in the basement of an auditorium in Urbana, Illinois, (after conducting a student orchestra in Mozart) drinking Coke from a bottle with as much relish as if he were sampling a worthy wine in his own home. With as much *élan* as in working with his own picked assemblage of players, he has imbued a W.P.A. orchestra with the sparkle he favors in Haydn. Where there are musical results to be accomplished, almost any means serves, as I discovered at Covent Garden in 1951 when on behalf of the Festival Year he was preparing *Die*

Meistersinger under a flag of truce with the Webster management. It was Beecham's desire to rearrange the seating of the orchestra, a plan that its concertmaster was resisting. During a break in the rehearsal, as a lively discussion of the subject was in progress, he spied me sitting halfway back and called out: "Hallo! can you hear the brass all right where you are sitting?" Realizing that this was an invitation to the negative, I said: "No, not too well." "Ha!" he said to the concertmaster, "Mr. Kolodin is the greatest acoustical expert in the United States. The orchestra has to be reseated." I am sure that any other person unknown to the concertmaster would have served the same purpose.

During this period, when Festival Hall had just been opened, and opinions about its suitability were raging in the British press, I visited Sir Thomas at his home in St. John's Wood, away from the center of London but close to the Abbey Road studios of H.M.V. Beecham had expressed some doubts about the design of Festival Hall (a view slightly tinged by the invitation to Arturo Toscanini to conduct the inaugural concert, which eventually became the privilege of Sir Malcolm Sargent). He had also implied that he might never conduct there at all. "You should take your orchestra to Festival Hall and show how well it can sound when balances are properly arranged," I suggested. He looked at me with neither wink nor word but with a clear indication that he was mentally framing a program for the purpose.

Almost alone among the not too many musicians I have known—though I suspect my sampling is representative—Beecham is one to whom you can talk about performance not necessarily in terms of his own, and about performers other than himself. Curious to have a firsthand recollection

of Milka Ternina, the Metropolitan's first Tosca (also Kundry), I asked him one day whether he had ever heard her: "Do I remember Ternina? Everybody laughed in 1903 when Puccini announced he was bringing this Croatian girl to sing Tosca at its first performance in London with Caruso and Scotti . . . but what a commanding personality! What stage presence! Scotti, you know, was not a bad artist at this time of life, but Ternina looked at him from the first moment as though she knew, eventually, she would have to tear him apart. When it finally happened, it seemed quite a reasonable thing at that!"

Between the oysters and the ice cream at the same lunch, he touched lightly on the scansion of blank verse in the Jacobean drama, mentioned the similarity of the Allegretto of the Beethoven Seventh Symphony and Greek feminine endings, discussed a glass blower from Liverpool who became a splendid English-horn-player and could play the whole solo passage in the prelude to Act III of *Tristan* without taking a breath (because of his industrial background), analyzed the difference between Richard Strauss and Wilhelm Furtwängler as conductors of Beethoven, and gave a brief summary of the orchestras he had recently conducted in Montreal, Dallas, Cleveland, and Washington.

Along the way he reviewed half a century of singers he had heard, declaring: "In fifty years, there have been only two true *Heldentenors*: Francesco Tamagno and Lauritz Melchior. At his best, Melchior's first act of *Siegfried* was about as well sung as it ever has been. Next to De Reszke and Ernest Van Dyck, Melchior's *Tristan* outranks all others for power and expressiveness. The best third-act *Tristan* was Van Dyck. There came into the voice a despairing, hunted quality that tore at the heart. Sometimes he sang in

several keys not intended by the composer, but the desperate quality of the emotion was uncanny. In much of the first act of *Walküre*, Lotte Lehmann was the greatest of Sieglindes. Melba was the most perfect vocalist of the last sixty years. Her scale rippled from low C to top C with never a change of quality. Ancona? A real 'Verdi baritone'—that is, one with the bottom resonance as well as the few top notes that baritones nowadays go in for. The fault for that was Mattia Battistini's . . . he had a rather ordinary voice, but he found a way of pushing it up to A and B and made a sensation. What is it Oscar Wilde said—'Nothing succeeds like excess'? Battistini had such a success, all the other baritones tried to develop top notes like his . . . and all these fellows sing nowadays is roles in which they can't use them anyway. Flagstad? An effective Isolde I'd say . . . quite an effective Brünnhilde for *Siegfried*. She sang all the notes, but there are those who have penetrated the parts more. Sometimes in London she gave the older operagoers the feeling she didn't always know the meaning of the words she was singing."

The hour and a half included reference to Sir Thomas's desire to record Mozart's *Entführung*, the particular problem being to find a bass for Osmin. "He must have unction," stated Beecham. "There are five different ways of singing Hunding, but only one way of singing Mozart. I remember Journet, Plançon, others of that class. They could sing a trill or a florid line as well as any soprano. Ask a bass to sing a trill these days and he'll look at you as though to say: 'Is the man out of his mind?'" The lunch was in 1949, and Beecham did not make his recording of *Die Entführung* until 1956, with Gottlob Frick as a remarkably successful Osmin. Bassos may have looked at him as if he were out of

his mind when he asked them to sing a trill, but he was, clearly, never out of patience until he found the man who suited him.

To divide artists into lyric and dramatic may be an oversimplification, but it serves a basic purpose. It expresses a temper, defines an attitude, symbolizes a point of view. In such a division I have no hesitation in nominating Beecham as, essentially, a lyricist superbly equipped to sing the praises of the composers who interest him most.

As may be suggested by Beecham's quotation of Beaumont and Fletcher or Robert Browning, or the brochure he has published on John Fletcher, his conception of music speaks to us in terms of an intelligible diction, a conformation of notes and phrases in which the line is inflected almost verbally. Naturally enough, this has its most powerful effect where words themselves are involved, as in his operatic conducting. But whether it is Haydn or Mozart, Schubert or Delius, the rise and flow and fall of phrases is molded and defined by the conviction that music is a language, not a mere collection of aural effects. That is why, also, in his system of conducting, something must always be left "for the evening," not reduced to a rigid formulation of purpose. In this way, the give and take will keep the language fresh and flexible, like accomplished actors exchanging lines always with a slight variation of pace and accent to prevent the script from settling into rigidity.

This, obviously, calls for certain qualities of leadership which are only inferentially musical. That is to say, they serve musical ends without necessarily being musically derived. To speak of Beecham's baton technique is somewhat akin to speaking of Don Quixote's windmill-tilting technique: it is whatever it has to be to accomplish the necessary

results. Needless to say, this works better with an orchestra accustomed to him than with one which is not—though the mere galvanic energy he applies to his public work is a powerful antidote to anything resembling indolence among his collaborators.

Facing the orchestra before a performance of "God Save the Queen" (in the presence of Her Majesty) at the opening of a recent Edinburgh Festival, Sir Thomas whispered to his players: "Make it vulgar. Make it good and vulgar." This, to me, summarizes the Beecham aesthetic: if it is refined, make it good and refined; if it is delicate, make it good and delicate; and if it is "vulgah," by all means let it be a ripping kind of vulgah. I cannot share the view (as Voltaire might have put it) that if there were no Beecham, we would have to invent one. It is a tribute to the abundance of Nature that in the time of a Toscanini there was also a Beecham to remind us music is made of man and man can be made of music.

♦ RUBINSTEIN, MUSIC, AND PIANO-PLAYING

THERE can hardly be anyone alive today with a personal recollection of the seven historical recitals of piano music which Anton Rubinstein gave in London's St. James's Hall in 1886. There are probably some who could describe the six Liszt recitals that Busoni gave in Berlin in 1911. Many, of course, remember Harold Samuel's Bach programs of the twenties, Artur Schnabel's Beethoven cycle of the thirties, and Ossip Gabrilowitsch's survey of the piano concerto repertory at about the same time. But for the air-conditioned age, the sustained demonstration of pianistic mastery by Artur Rubinstein in the winter of 1956 (Paris and London heard it first, then New York) was not only a grand tour of the piano concerto literature, but a tour de force not likely to be duplicated.

For the conditions that produced a Rubinstein have, themselves, ceased to exist, and are not likely to be duplicated.

In prospect, it seemed probable that among the seventeen concertos to be played in five programs within a ten-day period there would be much beautiful playing, with inevitable fluctuations in quality from this work to that. When he had finished the first two programs, one conclusion was inescapable. If Rubinstein does not play anything better than anyone else—a premise I am not prepared to defend—there are very few who play everything (Mozart and Rachmaninoff, Beethoven and Liszt) as well as he does. Backhaus may equal him in Brahms, but how would he fare in Chopin?

Clara Haskil's Mozart may be a paragon, but how about her Rachmaninoff? For that matter, Horowitz playing Rachmaninoff, Liszt, or Tchaikovsky might reach some heights untouched by Rubinstein, but what depths would he plumb in the César Franck Symphonic Variations, Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, or the Beethoven C major?

Rubinstein typifies the time before the new past (to borrow a useful expression by James Thrall Soby), when to be a pianist was to play the literature of the piano. An interesting index to such mastery may be found in the appendix to Berthold Litzmann's *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life*, which lists the repertory studied and performed by that fabled figure between 1824 and 1889. An incredible period of itself, it began with her studies as a prodigy pupil of her father, Friedrich Wieck, and ended with her last "new" work, the D minor Violin Sonata of her devoted friend Brahms. In the span of sixty-five years, few composers of consequence are omitted, from Scarlatti to Sterndale Bennett. In an even more inclusive way—Clara Schumann's concertos were limited to her husband's A minor, the last three of Beethoven, two each of Mendelssohn and Chopin, two only of Mozart, and the D minor of Brahms—Rubinstein confronts the present lot of interpreters as one apart, not merely in ability and outlook, but also in his sense of continuity where the instrument and its literature are concerned.

It was this sense of continuity, his feeling for embracing likenesses rather than incidental differences, which gave weight and substance to an endeavor that might otherwise have seemed self-glorifying and showy. Such an evening, for example, was the one that provided a Mozart-Beethoven-Grieg-Liszt sequence. It began with the Mozart A major (No. 23) within a chamber music frame provided by a small

ensemble under Alfred Wallenstein's direction, proceeded to the Beethoven G major (in a musically subtle and pianistically magnificent exposition of Beethoven's most Mozartean concerto), then treated us to Grieg and Liszt in a wholly different, rhapsodic vein. No magic had been practiced on the black instrument—it was the same, the only one in sight. But the range and volume of sound it produced were wholly transformed.

To those fortunate enough to hear the series from its beginning, Rubinstein spoke his mind on what he considers the touchstone of the whole literature by launching forth-into the Beethoven "Emperor." I am not divulging a confidence, because I merely deduced as much from the place of prominence it occupied and the manner of his performance. As conceived by Rubinstein on large lines, and with a massive tonal production, it rolled forth as a still-unsurpassed fresco of design and meaning, color and detail, by which everything to come might be measured. And though it was a perilous leap with which to set out on the long journey, it was at once the *beau geste*: the invitation to disaster which, once accepted and honored, made all to come more stimulating.

Not long after, I had occasion to talk with him about the five concertos of Beethoven, and he confirmed, verbally, what he had already expounded musically. Though each has its lovable character in turn, the "Emperor" leaves behind even such a magnificent but essentially intimate work as the G major (in which Beethoven finally comes abreast of Mozart's mastery of the conversational kind of solo-ensemble relationship). It projects the grand lines of the virtuoso concertos to come, by Liszt and Saint-Saëns, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, and finally Rachmaninoff.

I also have the notes of a conversation with him before he embarked on this musical marathon (which, within the ten-day span, included several all-night recording sessions). Although it was very close to fifty years since his first, nonnotable American appearances, he refused to consider it an anniversary gesture. "People always say: 'Fifty years before the public? Isn't he dead yet, or retiring?'" Nor did he consider it a feat beyond his contemporaries. Whether the sentiment and the modesty were equally genuine, I would not attest, but his words were: "I am not playing seventeen concerti in five concerts because I think it is such a big accomplishment. Casadesus could do it. Serkin could do it. So could others. Arrau could play fifty concerti, I am sure."

The reasoning seemed to be, rather, after numerous appearances in New York (also Paris and London) in which he was the guest and the conductor the host, he would like for once to be host himself and shape the results to his own taste. (On one occasion, I recall, his playing of the E minor Concerto of Chopin was a conductor's bait to keep the audience hooked through the preceding playing of the lengthy Fifth Symphony of Mahler.) "After so many years in which I have played some of them not so good, I would like to prepare them all to my own satisfaction," he observed. "After all, I cannot wait seventeen years more to play them one at a time with the Philharmonic."

The reference to "not so good" called for some elaboration, which Rubinstein was not reluctant to provide. "You know as a boy I had a fiendish talent for learning. I could pick up a sonata in the morning and grasp the essence of it in a day. But I didn't have the patience to go over and over the music again and again, polishing, developing, perfecting. I liked to play different things." In retrospect, the boy was

truly father to the man—quick to learn, interested in the whole range of the literature, disinclined to concentrate, but above all lured by “the music” rather than by what he could do with it at the piano or what the piano, per se, could do for him.

As is well-known, Lodz was the Polish town of Rubinstein’s birth; his development was truly international—Russian in his parental background, German in his early training, French in his youth and adolescence, English in early manhood, American in citizenship and residence in his middle years. He can recall the elderly Joachim as his first “protector,” with whom he played the sonatas of Brahms. Despite that master’s strictures against Wagner, Rubinstein’s curiosity was such that he regularly, but in secret, visited the top gallery of the Berlin opera houses when *Tristan* or *Meistersinger* was being played, and grew to know them so well that he could play “practically the whole score” of each from memory.

Polish musicians, when they are great—such as the De Reszkes, Marcella Sembrich, Paderewski, Paul Kochanski, Wanda Landowska—are internationalists by necessity if not by choice: “We have to speak other languages because nobody can speak ours,” Paderewski once said in explanation of his fluent German. But they are also intensely national, with a clannishness oddly dissimilar, for example, to the Hungarian kind. They have been known to help each other in circumstances that, for others, merely intensify rivalry.

Rubinstein had his experience of this with Paderewski. He had been studying several years in Berlin with Heinrich Barth when Joachim, as he phrased it, “seemed to sense that I was a little bored with studies. He sent me to his good friend Paderewski in Switzerland. This great man received

me, as Pole to Pole, very kindly. What did I play for him? Why, what else? *Premier cahier* Brahms's Variations on a Theme of Paganini. Of course, I played badly. But he was a man who played wrong notes himself and could understand a young boy's nervousness. He gave me a walking stick for a present, and said I should go back to Lausanne and return in the evening. At the hotel I found a message from him: 'Put on your best clothes, I am having people in.' " Eventually Rubinstein was asked to play ("again Brahms, but something more suitable"), and the great man showed his approval with a kiss.

Nobody has evolved a formula for the care and feeding of talent, for the patent reason that each talent is a case unto itself, with a predetermined pattern of development—unknown, of course, to the individual involved. Of many who leave the mark at approximately the same time, some will excel in the early running, only to lose momentum as the stretch lengthens. Others will have a slow start, spurt ahead in adolescence, and then fade completely. Once in a thousand times, the race will be run at an even consistency year after year, as with Jascha Heifetz or the late Josef Hofmann. The most fascinating of all, perhaps, is the man who has professional attributes from the beginning, works with more or less success decade after decade, but only slowly develops mastership at an age when others are counting the years till retirement.

Rubinstein spins an amusing tale of his first American tour (a direct consequence of the Paderewski evening), mostly matinees in Shubert theaters (Cincinnati, Chicago, Boston, etc.) when they were not in use for operettas. At a distance of fifty years, he had not forgotten H. E. Krehbiel, the celebrated critic of the *New York Tribune*, who "tore

me apart." However, Paderewski was still receptive to the seventeen-year-old in Switzerland, and he spent the summer listening and playing—"not lessons, really, he just told me little things." In a typically mischievous vein, Rubinstein recalled that it was the summer in which his mentor was composing his Sonata in E flat minor. Each day he would add a little to it, and eventually Rubinstein overheard it often enough to know it as well as the composer. During the winter, Rubinstein had an engagement in Warsaw, where the sonata was published on a certain Monday. "It happened that my recital was Tuesday and—you guessed it? Yes, I played the sonata. What a sensation! But, I told them, I had a day and a half to learn it. . . ."

"That's nothing," he added. "The first time I played Franck's Symphonic Variations was in Madrid. I learned it in thirty-six hours on the train from Paris. When I sat down at the rehearsal, it was a little strange . . . to play it the first time on the piano, and with orchestra! In the evening it went better."

In a world (1916) full of pianists (the Liszt pupils alone would fill one page, the Russians another), a young one had to wait his turn. What one did while waiting might very well determine what would happen when it came, if ever. For a decade, between 1908 and 1918, Rubinstein says he "lived the artistic life," mostly in Paris, occasionally in London. (Muriel Draper's *Music at Midnight* locates him in her music room when World War I was declared.) "Mind you, I am not complaining. I had, often, lobster and champagne, and often I had nothing." He knew the pangs of a park bench when he could not pay a hotel bill, and he also knew the joys of chamber music with Ysaÿe, Thibaud, and Casals. Living the "artistic life" meant, of necessity, living with the

painters and the writers as well as the players and the composers. Doubtless from this time dated the interest in paintings and painters which has enriched his life (in more than one way), and it certainly kindled the enthusiasms that made him, as he says "attaché to Les Six." He was a brilliant pianist, and musical—a combination rarer than would strike the unknowing as possible.

The central fact is that music was always more important to Rubinstein than piano-playing. Learning and playing new music of Poulenc, Milhaud, Honegger, Stravinsky, and other living composers was no task for a man who, at one time, made "quite a profitable business of playing *Salome*, when it was on everybody's tongue, at private parties. I would introduce the characters verbally, then play the music. I also made an arrangement of the famous 'Dance' which I played in recitals. It was very effective—like a good piece of Liszt. Even today I can play perhaps two hundred and fifty songs of Schubert, Wolf, Brahms, and Strauss without notes."

His first real, if localized success, he attributes to the Spanish public, in 1916. "They loved me for what they called my improvised way of playing. It was not really intentional with me, because I could not even then work out a conception and stick to it. But for them, it was a relief from what they called 'the pedants.'" Spain, by a natural affinity, led to South America, where he had a great success. His interest in the early movies led him, one day between engagements, to a theater in Rio. A piece by an unfamiliar composer made such an impression that Rubinstein went out of his way to make its creator's acquaintance. Heitor Villa-Lobos might have waited years longer for recognition, at home and abroad, had Rubinstein not initiated govern-

ment action resulting in the composer's first European journey.

South American success did not mean North American success, however. Rubinstein returned to the United States in 1920 and periodically for several years thereafter, but neither the public nor the player was ready for the other. In Europe, however, Rubinstein was easily the preferred pianist among the *littérateurs* and the people of fashion, as those who have sampled the atmospheric prose of the time can attest. He was soon as much at home in the Casino at Deauville as he had not been, years before, in Shubert's Casino Theatre in New York.

At this point, aged thirty-six or seven, Rubinstein had sufficient places to play which "liked" him—Spain, South America, Cuba, France, England (especially in chamber music)—to make a comfortable living while scorning places that did not "like" him. His cultivation of the then moderns, of the little-known Spanish literature, his excellence as a chamber music player, made him valuable to the phonograph, which, in turn, was more valuable to him than he could have imagined. For a new generation this was a pianist alive, versatile, curious, and resourceful. What went into the making of this fusion of sympathies we know now much better than we did then. When the small distinguished enterprises passed into the area of the larger, even more distinguished ones—the Chopin mazurkas, nocturnes, scherzos, polonaises, ballades, preludes, all complete, all expressive, all musical—it became apparent that a man of intellect with a flair for piano-playing had converted himself into a pianistic personality of the first order.

Recalling the labor involved, Rubinstein says with a sigh: "It was not easy. When I would start out to record, I would

know say six pieces perfectly, six more fairly well, and the rest really not at all. So I would have to sit down like a student and work out every note of them before I could go ahead. What I had in curiosity in those early days robbed me of what could be called the security of later years." He did not say in so many words that facility in youth was a formula for the musical equivalent of an old-age pension, but the thought was not too far distant.

What turned Rubinstein from a man who had "places to play where they liked him" to an artist who can play anywhere and be acclaimed? Something of an inner drive, doubtless, asserting itself more and more as youth receded and the pleasures of staying up all night, sleeping all day, and having breakfast at dusk dwindled. Much, also, relating to his marriage in 1932, the rearing of a family, and the need for success on a larger scale than had previously satisfied him. A woman of considerable musical culture—her first husband was the Polish pianist Mieczyslaw Munz—Mrs. Rubinstein is not his easiest audience. As lately as a year ago, he related with pleasure that a Chopin piece he had played the night before had finally come off. "I worked at it," he said, almost as one would describe separating a sticky nut from a rusty bolt. "I got down and sweated over it. After the concert, even my wife said it was good."

Conversely, the curiosity of youth, retained to manhood and blended with the discrimination of maturity, certainly contributed to Rubinstein's ascension. It is significant that he is not inclined these days to the little novelties and *premières* that attracted him years ago. He has by no means lost his interest in the contemporary scene, but he finds not much to interest him in it. "Perhaps I am growing old," he says "but this music does not say anything to me." I as-

sured him that many others, twenty years younger, would agree. Among composers of this era, he gives high rank to Prokofiev. "He had the greatest invention, and it stayed with him on an ascending progression to the end. *Romeo and Juliet* has wonderful, rich themes [he recalled a few, *viva voce*, as illustration] and also the last symphonies." Mention of the Shostakovich Violin Concerto prompted some words of praise for the composer's Tenth Symphony. The First Piano Concerto, on the other hand, he termed "a poor piece." Why he did not play the first performance, during the Second World War, of Aram Khachaturian's Piano Concerto, and why William Kapell did would make an interesting chapter for the autobiography he has thought about, but never written. Certainly he had more to do with the emergence of Kapell's brilliant talent than is generally known, and deplored his accidental death. "He was aggressive, impatient, unhappy inside. I would say: 'Willie, you have so much . . . a nice wife, fine family. At your age, I was nobody. . . .'"

I have avoided reference to Rubinstein's nonprofessional interests, his gifts as a conversationalist (in half a dozen languages), his varied taste in literature, his rarefied knowledge of European history, especially the history of its royal families, his interest in such addenda to living as clothes, food, wine, and cigars, his acute judgments of contemporaries and colleagues of the musical world, his gift for mimicry—made-up languages, sounding like Chinese or Arabic, but meaning nothing, are a special favorite—as not bearing directly on his musical artistry. He could have these interests and be a musical dilettante, or he could lack them and be a great master nevertheless.

Or could he? Mastery is of many sorts, and Rubinstein's

obviously has the suppleness of a fine leather long treated to bring out its inherent quality. Joachim and Paderewski were examples of men with a sense that music yields only as much as one brings to it. Their influence, years removed, may have convinced him that he had more to bring to it than most. Like all artists, Rubinstein is a synthesis of his inheritance, his experience, and his capacity to absorb. If, in youth, his spongelike receptivity took priority over a more grinding kind of application, it absorbed much more to be squeezed out in later life. Certainly there is no suggestion of desiccation in Rubinstein's art today, attesting to the juices in his nature. Rubinstein's career marks him as neither hare nor tortoise, but as somewhat more akin to those sharp-nosed creatures who are not satisfied until the scent and an inbred love of the chase lead them to the quarry in its lair.

♦ RICHARD TAUBER

IT IS not uncommon for a well-meaning if misguided evaluator of talent to describe a new artist as a "second" Galli-Curci or a "new" Paderewski. Such analogies are usually as false as they are facile, suggesting an inability to define the qualities of one individual save by allusion to another. For myself, I can imagine a second Galli-Curci more readily than I can a new Paderewski, the qualities of the first being much in the realm of technique (which can be developed, given aptitude and application), the qualities of the latter being intensely personal (which can no more be developed than personality itself).

So it is with the late Richard Tauber. I can no more imagine a second Tauber than I can a "*deutsche Caruso*" (in Italy, "*Caruso tedesco*"), as he was sometimes billed, to his intense annoyance. How long his influence will last or how far it will penetrate the imagination of those who never experienced his physical presence is hard to say. But there is little doubt in my mind that Tauber built an image of performance out of his talents which few of recent time have equaled. "To Tauber" may not be as readily recognizable an infinitive as "to Kostelanetz," but those who have ever heard either one can have no doubt at all of just what is meant by the expression.

For that matter, the equation is by no means an unbalanced one. Tauber's methods, vocally, were generally akin to the ones later developed instrumentally by Kostelanetz. In both, there is an unyielding devotion to melodic line,

or what may be more simply called a tune. If the secret of good prose, as Don Marquis once phrased it, is "to stroke a platitude until it purrs like an epigram," then it was Tauber's secret to caress tonal dross until it shone like audible gold.

For this he had abundant resources of voice and, what is more, of heart, mind, and temperament. What it sounded like in 1913, when he began his professional career singing Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Chemnitz Stadt-Theater at the age of twenty-two, I have no way of knowing. The date is significant, for it was not long until Germany was sealed off by war. By the time ordinary relations resumed, Tauber was a finished artist, ready for international recognition. It endured until his premature death in 1948.

From the mid-twenties on, when reports of his Mozart singing at Salzburg in 1923 began to whet the appetite (fed by a steady stream of recordings), the impression lingers of a sound with a richness all its own, of a beautiful evenness and an affecting warmth. By the time he had begun to appear in this country in the early thirties, it had thickened somewhat under the strain of nightly performances in the Lehár operettas (in one, according to his vis-à-vis Vera Schwarz, they sang a high C every night, and twice on matinee days, for several hundred successive days). But it was still a cherishable sound, which passed the test that makes any voice memorable—Caruso's or Pinza's, Lehmann's or Flagstad's—by combining singularity of timbre with individuality of purpose.

Even today one can think of a favored work and hear in the mind the nuance, the texture, the physical constitution of elements which made every *Tauberlied* a *Zauberlied*. Who, having heard Tauber sing "*Mädchen, mein Mädchen*"

from *Friederike*, or "*Ich bin Baron*" from Strauss's *Gypsy Baron*, or the thrice familiar "*Dein ist mein ganzes Herz*" will forget their sweep and sigh, the lift and distinction they wore like the monocle in his right eye? Like the glass itself, they were no mere affectation, but a necessary part of the body's functioning.

If it was Tauber's choice, eventually, to be the voice of such music as this, it was not for want of ability to sing anything else to which he put his mind. His vocal technique was a critic's delight and a competitor's despair: he was fluent in the usual languages, exemplary in several. A famous air in Méhul's *Joseph* found robust voice in him, as did Wilhelm Meister in Thomas's *Mignon*; his singing of Schubert's "*Die Post*" or the *Dichterliebe* of Schumann, Wolf's "*Anakreons Grab*" or Brahms's "*Ständchen*" was as fine as this generation has heard.

Like almost any artist of his popularity, Tauber was inevitably a part of his audience, sometimes its most appreciative part. In the time we knew him in this country, he was a broad-shouldered, somewhat stocky figure whose stride to the center of the platform from the wings had all the assurance of a hero who had already conquered. Once at the firing line, the monocle came out of the eye, the head was thrown back, the faculties were all concentrated on giving the freest, most compelling liberation to the itching impulse in the throat.

There were occasions when one wondered who was host and who was guest, so complete was the identification of singer and audience. That he loved the sound of his voice and reveled in the effect it produced was unquestionable (his excuse for this was better than most). There resulted more than a trivial amount of playing for effect, exhibition-

ism, and mere vocal high jinks. One observer (Desmond Shawe-Taylor in *Grove's Dictionary*) asserts that "a tendency to distort vowel sounds and high notes could possibly be traced to a natural desire to husband his voice during the many encores that were always demanded after his singing of a favourite piece." Perhaps. But I should attribute it to the same cause that made Lotte Lehmann sing such a phrase as "*Mein Herz*" in Schubert's "*Ungeduld*" always as "*Mein 'erz*." She had been doing it so long that way she could not imagine it being done any other way.

Like John McCormack, whom he closely resembled in manner and method, Tauber scooped to please as well as to conquer. If he lacked the rigorous self-discipline to distinguish between meats and sweets as McCormack did (the latter's audience always had to listen to what he wanted to sing of Handel or Schubert or Beethoven before he would sing what they wanted to hear of Ernest Ball or Del Riego), he could Tauberize with taste when in the mood. Nevertheless, one had to reckon with the possibility that a superb "*Verborgenheit*" of Wolf might be followed by a "*Lotosblume*" of Schumann immersed in vocal whipped cream.

Recalling how Tauber used his breath as a fine string-player uses his bow arm to play upon the vibrating mechanism (in his case the vocal cords), it strikes me that his closest affinity among string-players was Fritz Kreisler. Like Tauber, Kreisler was peerless in the great masterpieces of his literature—Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms—but he could also charm the unsophisticated ear with music in a lighter vein. In addition to many of his own compositions, Kreisler was equally adept in arrangements of "*Hab ein blaues Himmelbett*" (from *Frasquita*, in which Tauber sang Lehár for the first time) or such a

trifle as "Midnight Bells" from Heuberger's operetta *The Opera Ball*.

There will be, one may hopefully believe, others who will sing Mozart or Schubert as well as Tauber sang it. It is faintly possible, too, that a tenor may come along who can sing "*Dein ist mein ganzes Herz*" and not be shunned into silence. But it seems improbable there will soon again be a man who can voice the two great traditions of Vienna—the concert hall Schubert and Wolf, the music hall Strauss and Lehár—with equal facility and equal felicity. Such exponents of the Tauber school as Marcel Wittrisch and Peter Anders show that very good students can fall considerably short of the dean.

To produce the necessary results, the aspirant should have a mother who was a soubrette from Vienna singing at the Municipal Theater in Linz when he was born. He should come under the paternal influence* of an actor who has become the director of a solid, provincial theater (Chemnitz) by the time the young man is ready for an operatic debut. When the debut is a success that even a proud father could not anticipate, the paternal impulse should take precedence over the professional to the extent that the *Intendant* of the high-ranking Dresden Opera (Count Seebach) be invited to his very next performance. He concurs in the father's enthusiasm, and the result is a five-year contract.

Under other circumstances, the young tenor might spend his first, formative term of service in a theater of limited

* In some sources, Tauber's baptismal name is given as Ernst Seiffert, suggesting that he was a child of his mother's previous marriage. The biography by Diana Napier Tauber, his widow, is vague about the circumstances of his birth, save that Tauber, Sr., was on an American tour at the time, and did not take a real interest in the future singer until the boy was six years old.

resources, with no guiding standards of quality. Under these, he is an apprentice surrounded by fine conductors (the conductor of his debut *Zauberflöte* was the young Fritz Reiner) and singers in a theater that vies with Berlin to be Germany's answer to Vienna. Under rigorous discipline, he is indoctrinated through such parts as the Steersman in *The Flying Dutchman*, the Italian singer in *Der Rosenkavalier*, or the voice of the sailor in *Tristan*. In a season or two or three, he is singing José in *Carmen*, Pinkerton in *Butterfly*, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, Hans in *The Bartered Bride*, and other parts suitable to his voice—Belmonte in *Die Entführung*, Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. Among his contemporaries are Elisabeth Rethberg, whom he greatly admires, and the Italian tenor Tino Pattiera, who introduces him to the art of Caruso. Together they devote free time to concerts on their own, Pattiera as soloist, Tauber as conductor—a hobby from youth, and one that he indulged more and more in later life. He is one whom Bruno Walter recalls, in those early days, as “a born musician.”

Match these specifications with the kind of native talent Tauber possessed, and you have a man of thirty who is wanted by Vienna, in a position to choose as much of the Dresden or Berlin season as he wishes. In Vienna he finds himself able to meet his great idol Lehár, whose *Merry Widow* had been table music when Tauber was a boy, and whose *premières* at the Theater an der Wien were yearly events in Vienna. Admiration was mutual when they met at one of them, and from their affinity came Tauber's second career and the renewal of Lehár's inspiration which produced *Paganini*, *The Land of Smiles*, *Friederike*, and other celebrated works of the twenties. It is, as one can see, no

easy formula, as none could be to produce such splendid results.

When, as sometimes happened, Tauber was criticized for singing operetta rather than opera, he replied proudly: "I sing Lehár, not operettas." The distinction is far from superficial. Tauber-fanciers well remember his singing of a collection called the *Deutsches Volkslied*, which included a setting of "*Heidenröslein*." He was also a notable interpreter of the famous treatment by the eighteen-year-old Schubert. When he came to play the part of Goethe in *Friederike*, he sang Lehár's setting of the same adaptation of a folk poem, which is by no means the least of the fifty-odd versions listed in Erk's *Liederschatz*.

Few men are "originals" in the sense of doing something that has never been done before, especially if they are interpretative artists who draw upon the creations of their more gifted predecessors and contemporaries. Richard Tauber was a lesser opera-singer than all accounts suggest Leo Slezak to have been (they had a fine friendship), and Slezak could probably have made as remarkable a career in operetta had he chosen to do so. But, for our time, Tauber remains a striking example of a versatility that made him a name in many different kinds of households while he pursued a career that ended, oddly, where it had begun: with Mozart. His final appearance on the stage was in a performance of *Don Giovanni* at Covent Garden (the ill-fated Maria Cebotari was also a member of the cast) in the fall of 1947.

Perhaps there is some symbolism of our time in the death of so intensely national an artist in a foreign country, as a subject of England. Some accounts of his career describe

Tauber as half Jewish (on his mother's side) by ancestry, and not at all so by conviction. As early as 1932, when the upsurging Nazis denounced him in Graz, he retorted: "I am an honorary chamberlain to the Pope: how can I be a Jew?" For those concerned only with the quality of his art, the question was irrelevant. Now that a free Austria is flourishing again, there should be a place in some honored spot for a memorial to one who was born in Linz and died in London, but lived the life of his spirit in Vienna.

♦ GINETTE NEVEU

ALTHOUGH Ginette Neveu was known to far fewer Americans than Grace Moore, their names will always be linked in common misfortune: both were killed in airplane accidents in the pursuit of their professional careers. At this, however, the resemblance ends, for Moore had years of prominence behind her when her plane fell on taking off from Kastrup Airport near Copenhagen in January 1947, whereas Neveu was a symbol of new postwar talent coming to maturity when her plane ran into the peak called Algarvia on São Miguel Island in the Azores in October 1949.

For most people Neveu's performance of the Brahms Violin Concerto with Charles Munch and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 1947 was her introduction to American prominence. Actually Neveu first came to professional attention a dozen years before, as a gangling miss of seventeen. What she showed in Town Hall of brilliance and spirit was still unformed, and she returned to France, where she spent the war years. England heard her with enthusiasm when concert life was resumed, and she soon added America to her conquests. Nobody knew much, really, about what she was nonmusically; the usual arts of publicity were rather superfluous in the case of one who was so much musically.

Though she played in New York only once more (in 1948, again as soloist with the Philharmonic-Symphony, in Chausson's *Poème* and Ravel's *Tzigane*), Ginette Neveu

had already become one of those dominant artists around whom an era may center. She was, in fact, en route to America for her first Carnegie Hall recital and similar appearances elsewhere when she and her brother-accompanist Jean-Paul were killed. The headlines were for the boxer Marcel Cerdan, a fellow passenger.

From these scanty encounters, now all of a decade ago, there lingers the recollection of a forceful, varied musical personality, with strong opinions about music and a thorough capacity to make them convincing. She did not play Brahms like Szigeti or Heifetz or Kreisler: she played it like Neveu, with incisive driving power, neat precision, and firm emphasis, with the vibrant touch of tonal intensity which wrote her personal signature. When she held it in check, as she did in Chausson, she was still a fine artist, but not the fully functioning one the bigger compositions permitted her to be.

It will be said of her, I suppose, that she played the violin in a manly way—which is true if one understands this in terms of men equal to her in musical comprehension, mastery of the instrument, and subtlety of feeling. As with Erica Morini, to whose rank among nonmale musicians she was rapidly ascending, there was never a need to qualify her excellence in terms of sex. The name alone commanded attention, as with Landowska, Hess, Novaës, or Haskil.

Along with the distinctions of her playing was a presence equally compelling. A handsome (rather than pretty) woman of dark complexion, she had strong features framed by an abundance of blackish hair drawn back in a severe, simple way, falling nearly to the shoulders without trimming or adornment. In the frame of her art this was all consistent with a manner forthright and without affectation.

One remembers especially the flashing thrust of the bow arm, which she used with a whiplike flexibility to produce a tone more notable for clarity than for body, with a tight, finespun vibrance and much variety of color.

As well as being the symbol of new, postwar talent coming to maturity, Neveu is the unhappy symbol of a new kind of "Lost Generation," ranging from William Kapell (perhaps the most generously gifted pianist to be reared in this country) to the late Guido Cantelli. I think also of Ossy Renardy, another sterling violinist (who was killed in an automobile accident a few years ago) of the conductor Ataúlfo Argenta a similar casualty in Spain, and of three Englishmen: the pianist Noel Mewton-Wood, the splendid French-horn-player Dennis Brain, and their conducting compatriot Leslie Heward.

Some of them, such as Dinu Lipatti, the Romanian pianist-composer; Kathleen Ferrier, the great English mezzo-soprano; Rosita Renard, the Brazilian pianist; and Maria Cebotari, the outstanding Bessarabian soprano, succumbed to ailments beyond cure. Several others, such as Aksel Schiøtz, the Danish tenor, Roger Desormière, the French conductor, and Carlo Zecchi, the Italian pianist, survived misfortune, but were drastically handicapped in their chosen careers. In every instance, enough solid accomplishment had been realized to make them international celebrities. Nor is there much comfort to be found in the recordings we possess, for the great Neveu records and the great Kapell records and the great Cantelli records were those which they would have made this year and next year and in 1965.

Of all the question marks, the largest, most tantalizing will always remain beside the name of Cantelli, whose young career ended only weeks before that of his elderly benefactor

Toscanini (who died in the belief that his protégé's absence from America was caused by a recurrent back ailment). Would he have fulfilled his brilliant promise as an orchestral conductor, or would he have turned to opera to help solve La Scala's most pressing problem? Would he have gone beyond the technical and stylistic assimilation of Toscanini's methods to project something of the urgent emotional drive and aesthetic compulsions of his model?

In another age, mystics might have conjectured that the "gods" did not want a legend of false inheritance to be at large in the world, and ordained the end of the copy as well as the original.

None of the musicians I have mentioned was indispensable, nor has the art suffered such a shock as it did in the early death of Weber (at forty), or the Belgian Lekeu (at twenty-four), or the English Butterworth (at thirty-one). Mozart and Chopin and Schubert, also Bellini, accomplished so much without reaching the age of forty that one has to recognize the essential fulfillment of their destinies. But taken together the recent dead leave a conspicuous void in our musical life. Every generation has its share of tragedies, such as that of the lamented Carl Tausig, who had not reached his thirtieth birthday when he died in 1871, or Milka Ternina, who left the operatic stage at her prime when less than forty, or the brilliant tenor Rudolf Berger, who died in mid-career in 1914, or the highly regarded young American violinist David Hochstein, who was a World War I casualty. In our time the losses seem particularly grievous where artists of the calibre of Argenta, Kapell, Neveu, Brain, and Cantelli are concerned.

When I aired some thoughts on the sequences of calamities involving the last-named trio, I was taken to task by several correspondents for implicating air travel, and infer-

entially indicting it. We well know that Battistini would not leave the Continent if it meant taking ship, and Verdi withdrew from conducting the *première* of *Aïda* in Cairo because of the same distaste for sea travel. These prejudices seem quaint to us today, and no doubt an indictment of air travel will seem as quaint to others fifty years hence. Accident rates per million miles flown are impressively low, but the finality when something goes wrong cannot be denied.

I recall a conversation several years ago with Yehudi Menuhin, when he had just returned from India and, like a stone skipping across water, had just touched down in New York before bouncing on to the West Coast and elsewhere. I made some mild comment on the strain (if not the hazards) of the schedule to which he was committed, to which he replied: "We only do it, really, because we can, not because it is good." The machine, which can be a good servant, can also be a hard master if the musician permits it to be. There have been times recently when a Metropolitan singer has performed in Scandinavia on a Friday and in New York on a Monday. Long gone are the days when a Lilli Lehmann or a Jean de Reszke would not even leave the hotel the day before singing!

The combination of biological factors which went into the production of a Ginette Neveu would be better known to a geneticist than to me. But, of 196,000 French females born in 1919, a scant few hundred had musical talent. Of the hundreds, perhaps a dozen qualified for the Conservatoire, even fewer for the honor of studying with such a pedagogue as Carl Flesch. Among them all, there was only one Neveu or anything like her. Here, undoubtedly, was an artist whose growth would have been steady and profound, and

♦ LAMBERT, CONSTANT AND INCONSTANT

IN A retrospective mood at a mid-point in his career, Sergei Rachmaninoff posed the rhetorical question: "I have hunted three hares. Can I be sure I have killed one of them?" The reference, of course, was to the dispersion of his gifts in three directions at various times of life: as conductor, composer, and concert pianist (the sequence in which they occupied his major effort from youth to old age).

Even as he asked the question, Rachmaninoff must have known that the compositional "hare" had been tracked down in the Second Piano Concerto as early as 1901, when he was less than thirty. Of his eminence as a pianist there is no possible question: he occupied a solitary place in which even those who did not admire his music could respect his performance of it, or of Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, and Beethoven, which he played inimitably. Clearly enough, this questioning kind of self-doubt was as much a part of the Rachmaninoff mentality as it was of Tchaikovsky's.

The notion of the artist as hunter and art as the quarry can be applied to many other careers, such as that of the late Constant Lambert. When he was a developing composer in the early thirties, his brilliant volume *Music Ho!* announced a critic of rare gifts and individual attitudes. Intermittently thereafter one was aware of an equally rare talent for creative conducting. It was frequently on exhibition in England in the concert hall, the ballet theater, and the recording studio, and for a while in this country, when he

put a high gloss of musicianship on the unforgettable first engagement of the Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

Neither of these substantial attainments, however, satisfied Lambert's artistic craving. What he wanted, above all else, was a career as composer. He enjoyed an esoteric esteem for a jovial, but hardly important, score called *Rio Grande* (a Gershwin-influenced setting of a text by Sacheverell Sitwell concerned with the Rio Grande of Brazil), but the good fairies who blessed him with so rich an endowment withheld the gift he desired most. He wrote busily for the Sadler's Wells Company, of which he was an original and influential member, but no known work, including the final *Teresias*, approached the standard he set for himself—or showed to us the kind of quality he admired in others.

It would seem that a man of Lambert's resources and critical perception would have made an adjustment, by the time he reached mature years, in which his singular abilities would assume their proper eminence while his unfulfilled aspirations retired to a deserved limbo. His later years were accompanied by tales of undependability and dissipation—there was always an assistant conductor standing by at the ballet when he was scheduled to conduct—which have a sharper meaning in the circumstances of his death: it was attributed to diabetes, which may have provided a pathological basis for his undependability. Whether as cause or result, his taste for alcohol must have been an inordinately complicating factor.

If so, it would provide a resolution for the one (suspended) encounter I ever had with him. It was during his visit with the ballet to this country (in the fall of 1949) when, I was assured, his health and mental state were good.

The company had made an enormous impression, and his own contribution to it was widely admired. In a way, it was the culmination of a decade and a half's effort in which he and his coworkers had not only evolved a superb ensemble, but had also performed the miracle of creating such a lustrous principal as Margot Fonteyn.

On my arrival at the quiet East Side hotel where he was staying, I was directed to the bar. A glance at the glasses arrayed before him showed which way the ill wind was blowing. Fairly incoherent, yet masterfully assertive, Lambert alternated between apologies for his condition, enthusiasm for the book of Steinberg drawings on the stool beside him, and despair at being in America, where, it seemed, he was unhappy because his mother had been born in Baltimore. (I make no effort to interpret the association.) Paris, he stated, was the only place in which he felt really at home, and he would be off by plane for it the next day. Only then would he feel relief from the tension and the demands of America. There was nothing to do but suggest that he have some dinner (I had, according to our arrangement, already had mine), wish him well, and depart.

Clearly enough, such a condition was not the product of momentary stresses and strains, suddenly manifest; rather, it seemed, the overflow from a reservoir filled to the brim. In retrospect, one wonders how much was inclination and how much ailment, which the Lambert of the fine sensitive writing and the beautifully sympathetic feeling for Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, which the man torn by aspirations tending only to annihilation.

Doubtless the Freudians could make a tasty thing of the Lambert case. He was the kind of man whose background included, as the ambiguous phrase has it, "every advantage."

His father, George Washington Lambert (shades of the American disaffection!), was a painter who attained A.R.A. status, his brother a sculptor similarly recognized. Christ's Hospital provided him with a general education, the Royal College of Music (where his teachers included Vaughan Williams) with the specialized. While still a student, he became acquainted with Diaghilev, who honored him with the first commission he ever extended to an English composer. The ballet (a satirical view of *Romeo and Juliet*) was produced in Monte Carlo when he was twenty-one. Lambert was also at home in the literary world of the Sitwells, taking part, as reciter, in the first public performance of Walton's revised setting of Dame Edith Sitwell's *Façade*. When the Camargo Society (from which Sadler's Wells emerged) was founded in 1930, Lambert was its first conductor. *Music Ho!* was published in 1934, before he was thirty.

Dozens of men I can think of would consider themselves blessed to possess Lambert's talent either as critic or conductor. *Music Ho!* has been twice reprinted since the war, most recently in a Penguin edition, which must make it the most widely read volume of recent years on the music of the twenties and thirties. This despite Lambert's refusal to revise its contents or make them more "timely." He explained his attitude thus: "It remains a period piece and I am content to leave it as such, making no attempt to soften out the more controversial passages which may read surprisingly enough today when there seems to be a general view that all forms of culture are on the right side and should therefore be praised." No conductor of like talent in the general practice has appeared in England since the war. His specialized aptitude for ballet was founded on a twenty-year indoctrination no other man has had the op-

portunity—if he has had the talent—to assimilate. Neither attainment, however, was the answer to Lambert's problem of how to fulfill himself.

One tragedy of the artistic life can result from an insufficiency of talent aggravated by an overabundance of concentration. If there is anything worse—and the difference could be only quantitative—it would be an abundance of talent aggravated by an excess of dispersion. For, paradoxically, concentration can make a small talent seem greater than it is, while dispersion can provide the most gifted person with a formula for frustration. Because we see it at work around us—the new possibilities for dispersion including television, radio, records, and the films—the Lambert-like kind of career problem may seem peculiarly a product of our time. Leonard Bernstein, certainly, is a man who suffers from it, as does Oscar Levant. Others can substitute names of their own choice, such as José Iturbi, in another way Vernon Duke, and possibly Norman Dello Joio.

As there are no new careers, so there are also no career-problems.

Essentially, it is an age-old dilemma that confronted many men of multiple gifts in the past. Liszt's long career as a prodigy of the piano makes us forget that he gave up concertizing at thirty-six in order to devote himself to composition and conducting (he could not avoid teaching). Tchaikovsky was a critic for a while, as Weber was before finding that it interfered too much with his composing. Brahms toured as pianist with Reményi, and held positions as choral conductor and pedagogue before devoting himself exclusively to composition. Richard Strauss managed to arrange a balance between creating and conducting, but Mahler could not. Given a certain rugged kind of musical

mentality, such as that possessed by Georges Enesco, a man can be not only composer, composer-pianist, and composer-violinist, but conductor also. Most of Enesco's public appearances related to performances of his own music, however, which is a regular irregular occupation of such men as Stravinsky, Milhaud, and Hindemith. Igor Markevitch, to paraphrase a professional joke, is an example of a composer who gave up music to become a conductor.

Had Rachmaninoff not been a man of some considerable discipline, he too might have found the dilemma insoluble. It is fifteen years now since his death, and some may have forgotten that he was offered the direction of the Boston Symphony Orchestra not once, but twice, the first in 1910, following his first American tour, when a successor to Max Fiedler was being sought. The second, in 1918, came after the departure of Karl Muck, and was actually instigated by the late Ossip Gabrilowitsch, who termed him "one who is worthier of the honor." Simultaneously, he was invited to consider Cincinnati.

This may seem like a typical gesture to a celebrated "name," but before he was twenty-five, Rachmaninoff was considered the most promising young conductor in Russia. Following a Moscow program, in 1905 (Borodin's *Second Symphony*, Balakirev's *Overture on Three Russian Themes*, and Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*), a critic who held his abilities as an opera conductor in high esteem said: "In this realm of the symphony, the young conductor of the Bolshoi showed an equally great talent. This is a conductor by God's grace."

The reason given for Rachmaninoff's refusal to consider the second Boston offer (in 1910 he was still a resident of Russia and could not face a prolonged absence from his

home and family) may have a quaint sound today: "He had no programs ready." (Few young conductors today would consider that a handicap.) But the real reason ran deeper. He once wrote: "When I am concertizing I cannot compose . . . when I feel like writing music, I have to concentrate on that, I cannot touch the piano. When I am conducting I can neither compose nor play concerts." The obvious solution, then, was to avoid the one thing which made it impossible to do two others: conducting.

Significantly, in the year preceding the first performance of his Paganini Rhapsody, Rachmaninoff reverted to the symbol of the hunter and the hare in an interview with Andrei Sedikh published (Paris) in May 1933 in *Posledni Novosti*: "Instead of hunting three hares, I'm sticking to one. No. I don't regret it. I love to play. I have a powerful craving for the concert platform." Within a year he was hunting the other hare again, and composing the Paganini Rhapsody. Such a capacity for selectivity may be an even greater blessing than outstanding talent. It can be a harder one to cultivate if it is not inherent in the individual. Lacking it, the man of talent may find himself the hunted rather than the hunter, pursued rather than pursuing. As far as I can see, Lambert's problem was not complicated (as some have been) by a mania for money or even by election of the more "glamorous" work at the expense of the less. He abused no talents but his own, which, however precious, were his to dissipate if he wished. It is, in part, the purity of his impulse which makes us sympathize with him in his dilemma and regret the more that he died without a cleaner resolution of the dissonances involved.

It is hard to say how long *Music Ho!* will be read, and I do not have any great optimism about the durability of

Lambert's compositions. But as long as word of mouth lasts or records bear testimony, his grand verve and spirit as a conductor of ballet (something rather different from a ballet-conductor) will endure. He was a musician of parts and an artist in whatever he undertook. Many a musician, contemplating his career—very much in the spirit of Rachmaninoff's adage: "Music is enough for a lifetime, but a lifetime is not enough for music"—might say "were I as inconstant as thee." Those of comparable gifts might consider that even one with Lambert's energy, Churchillian physique, and quick adaptability was no more than an imperfect personification of the career he had marked out for himself.

♦ THE GERSHWIN PENTHOUSE

132 East Seventy-second Street has no outward marks to distinguish it from numerous other well-built, well-maintained apartment buildings in this pleasant section of New York's East Side. Yet if it were a similar structure in London's Mayfair, it would doubtless be a National Monument; if it were located on the rue Saint-Vincent overlooking Paris, it would probably be a property of la République française. Even in Vienna there would be a commemorative plaque on the wall facing the street. For it was in this building George Gershwin resided when he was writing *Porgy and Bess*.

It is unfair for history to romanticize the garret and belittle the penthouse. They are both the topmost quarters of the buildings in which they are located, with similar supplies of air, light, and views of surrounding rooftops. The mere fact that Gershwin was a man of considerable means and that his penthouse was also a duplex is no reason to ignore that it served him (as far as creative purposes are concerned) as well as any mansard-roofed studio in Montmartre.

I owe my acquaintance (too sporadic, too casual, to be called a friendship) with George Gershwin to Oscar Levant, with whom I became acquainted late in 1932. Some months earlier I had reported on a Sonatina for piano which Levant played at the first Yaddo Festival of Contemporary Music. I met him at the old offices of Chappell-Harms on West Forty-fifth Street, which served a particular generation of young

composers as an informal clubhouse, a cross between the Cheshire Cheese and the Café Mozart, a bourse for the rating of musical stocks (Stravinsky down, Hindemith up, Mompou holding steady). My favorable notice of Levant's Sonata, plus a mutual interest in baseball, cemented a friendship based on musical likes and dislikes. It was a rare week thereafter, for half a dozen years, that we did not meet two or three times in time for his breakfast and my lunch.

He was occupying a suite, with piano, in the Park Central Hotel (it was a favor to the management in those Depression days for a resident patron to occupy two rooms for the price of one). The location, of course, was in drop-in proximity to Carnegie Hall, and very convenient for an apprentice critic. We both liked the music of George Gershwin, with whom Oscar had been friendly for a dozen years. Either late in 1934 or early in 1935, Oscar mentioned Gershwin's progress on *Porgy and Bess* (a project well known to musical people) and asked if I would be interested in hearing some of it.

Several weeks later I arranged a time through Gershwin's secretary, and presented myself at 132 East Seventy-second Street. It was about noon on a Sunday. I was taken up to the penthouse and was soon admiring its suavely modish (not garish modern) interior, the view to the west from the spacious living room, with piano(s), and pictures, and books. Lunch time was at hand. I found myself at the table with Gershwin and Gertrude Niesen, a café singer of the girl-baritone variety who was seeking advice on lesser-known Gershwin songs for her act.

It soon developed that Gershwin was as interested in interviewing me as I was in interviewing him, though for a quite different reason. I would not attempt to reproduce

verbatim a conversation nearly twenty-five years after it happened, but it went something like this: "Oscar tells me you were at the Venice Festival in 1932 when my Concerto in F was played." "That's true," I said. "Fritz Reiner conducted, and Harry Kaufman was the soloist." "Tell us about it," prompted Gershwin. "I never had the chance to hear about it from anybody who was there." "Well," I said, "Reiner had a lot of trouble with the Scala Orchestra, which was playing the festival, especially with the trumpet-in-the-hat effect in the slow movement. But you know Fritz. By the time of the concert he had a really fine performance. It went so well Kaufman had to repeat the finale."

"Think of it," said Gershwin. "They had to repeat the finale." Turning to Miss Niesen, he said: "The only other time that ever happened was when Von Bülow played the Tchaikovsky Concerto for the first time in Boston in 1875, and he had to repeat the finale." She seemed duly impressed; I, frankly, was astounded. Where had Gershwin acquired this bit of esoteric information? When I had the opportunity, I looked it up, and by George, Gershwin was right.

The talk passed on to other, less memorable things, and eventually we passed into the living room. Among the subjects of conversation was paintings, of which Gershwin had a highly esteemed collection. He picked up a recent volume of Picasso reproductions and leafed it through. "Funny thing," he said, "I couldn't find my picture in here. I was a little worried, for it cost quite a bit. So I had a photograph made, and sent it to him. Quite some time passed and nothing happened. I had a duplicate made, and sent it to Picasso again. I couldn't understand why he didn't answer me." "Maybe he thought you were just trying to get his autograph," suggested Miss Niesen. "Maybe," said Gersh-

win. "On the other hand," I said, "he had yours." "That's right," said Gershwin, "I never thought of that. Anyway, after quite a long time, I got back one of the photographs. On the back was written: 'This is my picture. Pablo Picasso.'"

The books on the shelves ranged widely through the current lot, with novels of Huxley, Virginia Woolf, and Hemingway juxtaposed to Rudy Vallee's *Vagabond Lover*. I picked the last up, idly enough, and noticed that it had an affectionate inscription to Gershwin. "A fine fellow, Rudy," said Gershwin. "I like him very much."

He had, by this time, moved to the piano, and said: "Would you like to hear some of *Porgy*?" The answer, for which Gershwin did not wait, was obvious, and he was quickly working away at a chromatic bass figure, joined by a plaintive melody. "That's the lullaby from Act One," he said, softly intoning the words "Summertime, and the livin' is easy." We all (including Gershwin) listened enthralled, Miss Niesen and I conscious that we were hearing a Gershwin strain unlike any we had ever heard before, the composer conscious of the effect his melody was making, no doubt well established through many other trial runs.

There followed a variety of bits and pieces from other parts of the score, too discontinuous, really, to provide the impression I was in quest of, yet the only thing possible in the circumstances. After a time, I suggested that I leave, as the others had business to discuss, and I could come back another time. We agreed on another day, and I left.

On the second occasion, there was no other guest. Gershwin was working in his study on the upper level, at an intricate desk of his own design, which was large enough for oversized orchestral score paper, and was fitted with in-

genious racks and bins, sliding pigeonholes, etc., for the tools of the composer's trade. I was then taken on a short tour of the apartment (not including the gymnasium or the room set aside for his pursuit of painting as relaxation). All of this must have been on the way to the piano, for he was soon at the keyboard, I beside him, to the left, at the bass end.

This time the progression was quite systematic from the beginning with the quasi-overture, actually a mood-setting piece with the curtain up on a darkened stage, and a solo piano "off" beating out a rag rhythm to suggest the life of Catfish Row before the main characters enter. Gershwin seemed less concerned with the musical materials, which were first-rate vignettes, than with the contrapuntal scheme by which he had woven them together. Here and there were snatches of characteristic phrases—"not really leading motives," he said, "but associated with some of the people, like the goat-music for Porgy." After the crap game started, he made mention of the canon on the words "Crown cock-eyed drunk." It sounded plausible enough at the piano, but, I regret to say, did not make much of an effect in the theater.

For that matter, many of the devices of which Gershwin was most proud (marking, as they did, his strides as an "educated" composer) were heard only during the first run of some 125 performances after the October 1935 opening. When the work was revived after his death, it was also more than a little revised. The dialogue carefully written to an intervallic pattern was deleted: the accents applied by the performers themselves had proved more direct and telling than Gershwin's, his intellectual devices having proved alien to the people who were supposed to be performing them.

As for the flowing melodic lines and the happy swing of what he called the "Banjo Song" ("I Got Plenty o' Nothin'"), he seemed so sure of their effect that further attention was unnecessary. Asked to express an opinion about operatic masterpieces with a special appeal to him, Gershwin cited *Carmen* as his number-one enthusiasm—for Bizet's use of a local color (even as he, an outsider, had gone to Charleston for "atmosphere") and *Boris Godunov* for its dramatic impact and use of a chorus as an integral part of the play. Certainly those who know the "Buzzard Song" (deleted after the Boston trials) find more than a little assimilation of Mussorgsky in it. And the cries of the "Honey Man" and the "Strawberry Woman" are perhaps even better done (they have more melodic appeal) than Charpentier's innovation, several decades before, in *Louise*.

After a couple of hours, the session was terminated on behalf of urgent shopping for a forthcoming trip. Would I like to come along, asked Gershwin, so we could talk some more? My destination was in his downtown direction, and I shared a cab with him. Asked about the orchestration, he said he had done some, but would soon be leaving for Florida to work at it intensively. The talk was divided between his reflections on the kind of sound to be gotten from an orchestra of forty-odd (a great concession, by his producers, the Theatre Guild, for the usual pit orchestra is barely half that large) and indecision as to whether Brooks Brothers or Tripler's was a more likely shop for the garment he needed.

While he went about his business and I about mine, I reviewed mentally the impressions of the two visits. It also occurred to me, that during a lull in the playing of *Porgy* conversation had reverted to the *Rhapsody in Blue*. He had

told me how he had picked up a paper one day and read he was hard at work, when he hadn't even started, and how it had all been done in a couple of weeks. With the impertinence of youth (mid-twenties), I said: "Have you ever thought of rewriting it and strengthening some of the weak spots?" "Yes," said Gershwin, "but people seemed to like it the way it was, so I left it that way."

Having people "like" what he did was a necessary part of Gershwin's functioning, even more perhaps than with most creative artists. Aside from the question of royalties, and how long a show ran, and earning power generally, he needed a quick affirmative reaction from his listeners, no matter how few or how many they were. Oddly, too, it was the "likable" parts of *Porgy and Bess*—the half a dozen hits (more, in an "opera," than he had had in several recent musical comedies)—which kept interest in it alive and created an audience for its revised, reduced, posthumous form.

Recalling the contemporary valuation of *Porgy*—including my own, after daily attendance through the month-long rehearsal period to gather material for a magazine article—I would say it was condemned (by some) for the wrong reasons, and admired (by some) for equally wrong reasons. The English language lacking such a term as the German *Singspiel* or the French *opéra comique*, *Porgy* failed to measure to the expectations of those looking for an opera, even qualified as a "folk" opera. My own post-mortem is that I attached more value than was merited to the "compositional" effort that Gershwin put forth in *Porgy* and did not appreciate fully the inimitable gusto and freshness of his melodic writing.

Gershwin, like Schubert—and, allowing for the vastly dif-

ferent cultures that produced them, they are as much alike as any two composers I can think of—had a genius for music, but only a talent for composition. Reared as he was, Schubert possessed a latent discipline which, when he tried very hard, enabled him to write a fine quartet, or such trios as the E flat and B flat, or the “*Forellen*” Quintet. With a text to guide him, he wrote more superb songs than any composer in history. Without one, he floundered as often as he soared, in his sonatas, symphonies, etc.

Reared as he was, Gershwin lacked real predisposition to anything but the 32-measure popular song (of which he was a complete master), and only painfully acquired the discipline necessary to write such a relatively shapely work as *An American in Paris*. By any standards—and most of all, by those of the operas he admired most—*Porgy and Bess* is a mixture of elements more intertwined than interrelated, with the arches of melody actually holding up what should be the supporting walls.

However, men who can learn to do everything else cannot “learn” to write the Schubert or Gershwin kind of melody, which is the primary reason why *Porgy* continues to be heard and enjoyed. How much trouble Gershwin could have saved, I sometimes think as I pass 132 East Seventy-second Street, if he had known himself then as well as we know him now.

♦ WITH STRAUSS AT GARMISCH

NEITHER the radio program *Information Please* nor service in the Army Air Force would seem a predestined way of arriving at a meeting with Richard Strauss, but a combination of the two, plus a world war, provided that unexpected outcome for me. Shortly after the end of the war, in the spring of 1945, Dan Golenpaul (for whom I had worked for half a dozen years as a member of the *Information Please* editorial board) told me of his plans for a USO tour of Europe in the summer. Would I be able to come along? Thanks to a co-operative commanding officer (James L. Straubel), with whose Air Force unit I was working in New York at the time, the paper work was soon under way.

After a suitable number of weeks, matters were arranged and I arrived in Paris shortly after July 4, the other members of the group having preceded me by some days. In addition to the familiar trio of Clifton Fadiman, John Kieran, and Franklin P. Adams, there were Beatrice Lillie and her English colleague, Reginald Gardiner. Our assignment was to tour the American occupation zone of Germany and Austria with a program divided between the always entertaining specialties of Miss Lillie and Mr. Gardiner and a quiz session that might or might not be entertaining. In addition to producer Golenpaul, the entourage included Miss Lillie's accompanist, Norman Hackforth, the excellent and versatile pianist Joseph Kahn (for many years a member of the NBC Symphony), and, as additional edi-

torial consultant, the novelist, editor, and critic Joseph Freeman.

The less spontaneous, still-unrehearsed performers, pursuing a somewhat unpredictable itinerary from Augsburg in the south to Kassel in the north, and back by way of Regensburg, found themselves, in the early days of August near Munich. American units were dispersed all the way to the Swiss border, and we were to be based for a few days at Tutzing, south of Munich, on the Starnberger See (a superb lake surrounded by hills, full of associations with Wagner's King Ludwig). A series of villas with spacious lawns rolling down to the lake front had been commandeered for use by occupation personnel, and we were assigned the use of adjoining ones. I shall not have difficulty in finding them when next I am in Tutzing, for two houses farther on, one bore a plaque attesting that Johannes Brahms had spent the summer of 1873 in it, and there had written his Haydn Variations.

Saturday, August 4, 1945, brought the information that our assignment for the evening was a performance at Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Inquiry established it as a drive of perhaps an hour and a half; we would leave in midafternoon. En route, it occurred to me that Garmisch was known for two things: it was a famous skiing and mountain-climbing resort where the Winter Olympics of 1936 had been held, and it was the long-time country home of Richard Strauss. For years very little had been heard of Strauss by the world outside of Germany. I had no way of knowing whether he was still living in Garmisch, though I recalled having read that he had been found in good health when American occupation troops reached the area early in May.

At Garmisch we were met by a Special Services officer who

escorted us to the hotel where we were to be put up for the day. On the way I asked him whether Strauss was living in Garmisch, and he said yes, he was. Would it be possible to pay him a visit? It would require making some arrangements, he answered, for Strauss had been bothered during the early days of the occupation by GI's seeking autographs from the man they thought had written the "Blue Danube" Waltz. He would ask the "Town Major," a music-lover who considered Strauss's privacy his personal responsibility.

Shortly after dinner, our liaison returned, with the "Town Major." He reported that Strauss had no objection to meeting "radio people from New York" (as we were described). There would be time for a visit before the evening performance in the Olympic hockey rink. Miss Lillie was resting, and several of the others were out strolling, but the two musicians (Hackforth and Kahn) and the two music-lovers (Gardiner and Freeman) were ready. We piled into the army car.

The hyphen in Garmisch-Partenkirchen represents a mountain stream that separates two ancient villages: in a few minutes' drive we had crossed it and drawn up before a handsome villa of rather simple design, with a spacious tree-shaded lawn ringed by an iron fence. The grounds at the back lost themselves in woods rising sharply to a mountain. The front view was directly across the valley to the towering Zugspitze, with its ski tow. A path around the lawn led to the back of the house and the customary entrance door.

Our guide rang the bell, and the door was opened by a tall, partially bald gentleman, recognizable as the baby of the musical bath in the *Sinfonia domestica* of 1904, now

with a striking resemblance to pictures of his father at forty. Passing through a hallway into the sitting room, we were greeted by his wife, then by the famous Pauline, the composer's domestic partner for more than sixty years. By contrast with the simple exterior, the interior of the house was a picture of tasteful elegance, a suitable surrounding for a man who had earned more from his gifts, probably, than any composer in musical history. The villa and its sumptuous furnishings, I learned later, had been purchased from the profits of *Salome*.

A liqueur was being passed around (the Strausses dined early) when a door from the front of the house swung open and a bustling figure in gray trousers, bow tie, and alpaca jacket—such as bank clerks sometimes wear—came into view. Strauss in his eighty-second year moved with remarkable vitality and erect carriage around the room, shaking all our hands in turn, and murmuring “Very happy, very happy” in understandably unpracticed English.

Group conversations, especially bilingual ones, are not very satisfactory, but with the younger Frau Strauss (a Viennese) speaking some English, and Freeman quite fluent in German, an exchange of views was possible. The first question from Pauline de Ahna Strauss was: “How is my old friend Otto Kahn?”—a query somewhat difficult to answer, as he had died a dozen years before. However, she really was not interested in an answer, but went on to tell us how miserable Garmisch had been all during the war, especially during the later phase, with its perpetual black-outs. “The only real pleasure we had,” she said, as the composer nodded, “was in hearing by short-wave late at night a broadcast from the Metropolitan of *Rosenkavalier*.” (That might have been February 19, 1944, with George Szell con-

ducting.) Rather than being put out by the visitation, the ruddy-faced, youthful-looking Strauss was altogether genial, abruptly announcing: "I must play something for you."

He led the way forward through the library to his study and music room, which was dominated by a large grand piano finished in a snow-blond wood (a presentation to him on some anniversary) and a mammoth writing-desk, hexagonal in shape. Sitting in its well, one was surrounded on three sides by flat space on which the largest score-sheets imaginable could be spread. Behind it were high windows looking toward the mountains, and to either side of them, tiers of baroque-shaped open shelves bearing antique china and glass. Facing the piano were shelves for the overflow from the library, and between them, glass-covered cabinets containing rows and rows of bowls, trophies, inscribed mementoes of *premières*, and scrolls and parchments attesting to honorary citizenship in virtually every German city of size from Bremen to Strauss's native Munich. Here, as in the library itself, elegantly bound complete sets predominated, including the collected works of Mann, Dostoyevsky, Thackeray, Goethe, Schiller—even some of Sinclair Lewis.

Strauss was now at the piano, and "something for you" was quickly recognizable as a *Rosenkavalier* medley, mostly derived from the finale of Act II, with its *Ochswalzer* in conclusion. It was played with *élan* and a good many wrong notes. The composer's hands moved briskly for a man of his years, but the sense of location was clearly impeded by lack of practice. It was, in all, less a rendition than a gesture, rewarded with hearty applause from all. The Strausses had heard that Kahn was an accomplished pianist, and the composer gestured for him to come to the keyboard. After some preliminary runs, he launched into a cleverly elaborated version of "Summertime." When he finished, Strauss

said in German: "You wrote that? Very pretty." One of the group asked Strauss if he would like to hear some jazz, which Kahn plays fluently. His answer was a curt "Nein!" Kahn then played a Chopin étude, to which all the Strausses listened with keen interest, and highly complimentary comments: "*Wunderschön!*" "*Fabelhaft!*" "*Unerhört!*" They applauded enthusiastically at the end, Mrs. Strauss saying: "It is long since we have heard real piano-playing."

Our hour's visit was all but over, but we had a chance to see the beautifully furnished dining room and the front sitting-room, also to admire the statuettes of characters from Strauss operas, mementos of his great predecessors Brahms and Wagner, a Beethoven letter, etc. Before we left, Strauss took a packet of postcard-size photographs from the desk drawer (a GI for whom he had posed in the garden a few weeks before had sent him a supply), and, asking each of us to spell out his name, inscribed them carefully in turn, noting the date: 8/4/45.

As we left, Strauss's son introduced us to the youngest member of the household, a tall lad of about eighteen who, he said, was going to be a musician. Asked his name, his father replied: "He is Richard III. Richard Wagner was 'I,' my father Richard 'II,' my son Richard 'III.'"

The enjoyable aspects of the visit were tinged with one shadow. When the question of Hitler and Nazism came up, the younger Mrs. Strauss (like all others in the country to whom one spoke at the time) pictured them as evils apart from anything inherently German. She alluded to several works Strauss had written with Stefan Zweig and other non-Aryans, and the Salzburg première of *Die schweigsame Frau*, which had been canceled when Hitler decided not to honor its nonconformist views with his presence. She, of course, was partly Jewish, and it is generally believed that some of

Strauss's apparent compliance with the regime was designed to protect his son and daughter-in-law from molestation. (The recently published correspondence with Zweig supports this view.)

One puzzling aspect of the visit was not resolved for me until some time later, during a conversation with Joseph Szigeti. I had noticed, on the impressive writing-desk, a full-score manuscript of *Till Eulenspiegel* from which Strauss was making a clean pencil script. The explanation that had been drawn through our imperfect communication was that the printing plant of his publishers had been bombed out and the plates destroyed. Somebody wanted to do a performance, and had appealed to Strauss for a score, which he was writing out.

Szigeti's story concerned the occasion when Strauss made his last visit to London (1947) and was guest at a ceremonial dinner following a concert of his works. The violinist was given a place of honor next to the composer, and during their conversation mentioned the high price a friend had paid for a Strauss manuscript. "He should have come to me," the composer said. "I would have made him one cheaper."

Whether Strauss was filling such an order at his writing desk in Garmisch would be only speculation. I regret that there was no visible sign of his then recently completed *Metamorphosen*, for the opportunity to talk about it might have resolved some of its riddles. In retrospect, however, his geniality and good humor might have been an invisible sign that the aged, but vital person who shared a post-dinner liqueur with us had been breathing the exhilarating air of the Bavarian Alps and produced a work that proved him still a master.

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